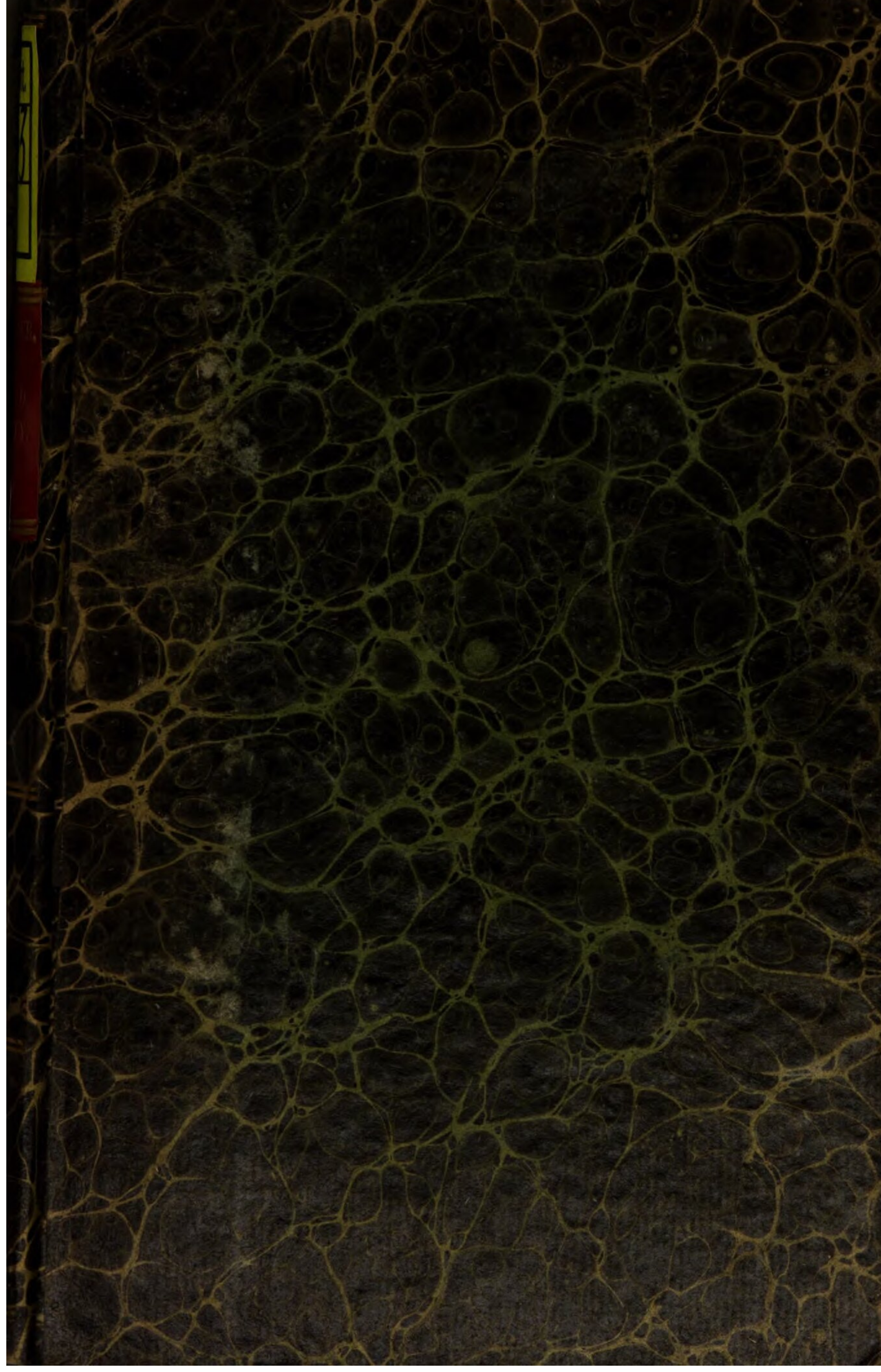




1463

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SACRED HISTORY,

SELECTED FROM

THE SCRIPTURES;

WITH

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,

PARTICULARLY CALCULATED

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

IN

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

SIXTH EDITION.

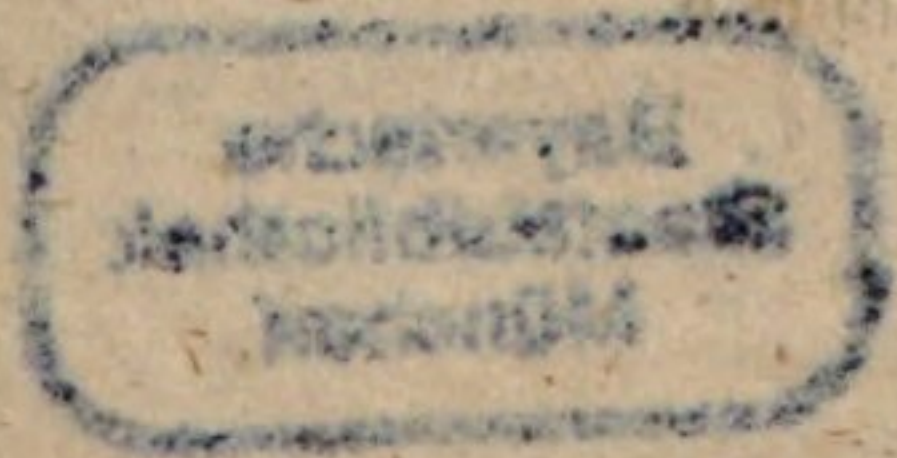
VOL. I.

BY MRS. TRIMMER.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST.
PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD; AND J. HATCHARD,
PICCADILLY.

1810.



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THE QUEEN.

MADAM,

THE following Work was composed with a view to assist young minds in the acquisition of RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE, by removing the difficulties which prevent their obtaining an early acquaintance with the HOLY SCRIPTURES. I presume to hope that my design will excuse me, both to YOUR MAJESTY and the world, for the boldness of the undertaking, and the defects in the performance of it.

The public will not wonder, that I should be particularly solicitous to obtain the honour

of YOUR ROYAL PATRONAGE, as YOUR MAJESTY is so eminently distinguished for the practice of VIRTUES which are no where perfectly taught but in the SACRED VOLUME.

It is the peculiar felicity of this nation, that every mother may look up to the THRONE for a pattern of the truly maternal character, and behold YOUR MAJESTY instructing YOUR ROYAL PROGENY in the discharge of those duties which lead to IMMORTAL HAPPINESS.

May the influence of Your illustrious example be universally extended! May YOUR MAJESTY long continue to bless this land, and soften the cares of ROYALTY to the best of SOVEREIGNS! And when you shall obtain an incorruptible crown, may it be remembered by posterity, that YOUR MAJESTY added lustre to an earthly one, by adorning

adorning your mind with the graces of Christianity, and diffusing happiness to all around you!

I am, MADAM,

With all humility and gratitude,

YOUR MAJESTY'S

Most dutiful, and most devoted Servant,

SARAH TRIMMER.

Brentford, Jan. 1, 1788.

adorning your mind with the graces of Chris-
tianity, and diffusing happiness to all around

you!

I am, Madam,

With all humility and gratitude,

Your Maistry's

Most humble and most devoted servant,

BARBARA TRIMMER.

P R E F A C E.

THE opposite customs which have, of late years, prevailed in many schools and families, of either suffering the Scriptures to be read by children in a promiscuous manner, or totally neglected, may be justly regarded as principal causes of the profaneness and libertinism of the age; for (as an excellent author observes*) “as soon as we lay aside the Sacred Writings, which are the only infallible guide of *faith* and *practice*, we must of necessity go wrong.—Our all-wise CREATOR would not have given them to us, if He had not known that we had need of their assistance;” therefore, it is presumptuous to suppose we can educate youth properly without them; and it may justly be considered as an irreverent act, to make use of GOD’S HOLY WORD with no farther end in view than the improvement of pupils in *the art of reading*.

Since it has pleased GOD of His infinite compassion to bless us with a book whose Divine contents are variously adapted to all ages and conditions of mankind; it is certainly the indispensable duty of parents and teachers to draw the attention of children to it as soon as possible.—Every part of early instruction ought to be held in subordination to the study of RELIGION.—To excite in the minds of *young children* a desire of being made acquainted with the SCRIPTURES ought doubtless to be our first care, instead of making classical learning and accomplishments the only objects, as is too frequently the case; and as they advance in years, our next endeavour should be to instruct *youth* how to

* See preface to Ostervald’s Arguments.

form their judgment, and settle their opinions by the ORACLES of DIVINE WISDOM. The neglecting to do so is a capital and fatal error. It would be a very proper and pleasing exercise to young students, were they taught to examine the sentiments of such heathen authors as are usually put into their hands by the *precepts of the gospel*.—To compare the doctrines of our SAVIOUR and His Apostles with the systems of the most admired sages of antiquity.—To consider how far the examples of heroism and virtue, recorded in profane history, are worthy of the imitation of *Christians*.—To understand what it has pleased the ALMIGHTY GOVERNOR to reveal concerning the wonderful dispensations of His providence in respect to *nations* and *individuals*—and to form a proper estimate of the rewards of piety and righteousness held out by Christianity, when contrasted with the imperfect notions entertained on these important subjects by the most enlightened among the heathen.

Were a method of this kind pursued, I am confident it would be attended with the most beneficial effects; youth would not be liable, as they now are to imbibe *heathen principles*—their passions would be kept in due subjection—their conduct would most likely reflect honour on their instructors, and be productive of lasting happiness to themselves, and all with whom they are connected.—They would be armed against the dangerous allurements of this world, and solicitous to prepare themselves for a better.

It must however be acknowledged, that these purposes cannot be effectually answered merely by putting the BIBLE into the hands of young persons, without giving them proper directions for the perusal of it.—Great care is required in selecting for them such parts of the Sacred Writings as are suited to the progressive improvement

improvement of youth ; and it was my experience of the inconveniences attending an *indiscriminate use* of the SCRIPTURES, when educating my own children, that first suggested to me the design of collecting together the historical parts, and writing an easy comment on them. In executing this plan I found, that without having recourse to the *prophetic writings* my work would be very imperfect, as the *Prophets* are, in many instances, the only *Historians* ; and I fortunately met with a hint in the preface to Dr. Gregory Sharpe's *second argument in defence of Christianity*, which was very serviceable in pointing out the method which is here adopted, of transposing chapters and verses, in order to make the *historical* and *prophetical* books explain each other by the mere force of *series* and *connexion*.

A complete arrangement of the SCRIPTURES in this way is not practicable, because the times in which some of the SACRED ORACLES were written cannot be exactly ascertained ; neither will it be possible to understand others, till the consummation of all things shall have brought to pass the events, to which they will then be found to relate : however, it must, in the mean time, be very satisfactory, and a great confirmation of the truth of the inspired writings, to observe the completion of such numerous predictions, as an attentive mind will easily perceive, even in the circumscribed limits of the following volumes.

There appears to me one very material inducement for a more particular attention to the *Prophecies* than it is usual for the generality of Christians to give ; which is, that *they* alone unfold the councils of Divine wisdom in respect to NATIONS : and explain for what causes GOD inflicts national judgments, and on what condition

conditions He averts them—particulars which it is the concern of every individual to know.

There is great reason to lament that the **OLD TESTAMENT**, in general, is frequently neglected, even by many Christians, as an *obsolete Book*.—The numerous allusions of our **SAVIOUR** and His Apostles, to different passages in it, furnish a sufficient argument for recommending the study of that invaluable repository of Divine truths, and St. Paul expressly says, that the events recorded there were written for the example of those who should live under the last dispensation.

The **NEW TESTAMENT** in some respects is certainly that part of Scripture with which Christians are principally concerned; but this cannot be understood without the **OLD TESTAMENT**. The first three chapters of Genesis contain the basis of all revealed religion; and it is only by a frequent reference from one part of Scripture to another that the great plan of Divine goodness in the creation, government, and redemption of mankind can be traced.

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SECTION I.

OF THE CREATION.

From Genesis, Chap. i, ii

IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so.

And God called the firmament heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He seas: and God saw that it was good.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so.

And the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind, and God saw that it was good.

And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also.

And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth:

And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; and God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

And

And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind. and it was so.

And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the LORD GOD made the earth and the heaven.

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the LORD GOD had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every thing that creepeth upon the earth.

And the LORD GOD formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

And the LORD GOD said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

And out of the ground the LORD GOD formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl

of the air, and to every beast of the field : but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

And the LORD GOD caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

And the rib, which the LORD GOD had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife ; and they shall be one flesh.

And GOD blessed them ; and GOD said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

And GOD said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat ; and it was so.

And GOD saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This Section is taken from the very beginning of The BIBLE, and is part of the Book called *Genesis*, which contains the Sacred History of 2367 years : it was written

written by Moses, who was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT to give a relation of things which God in His infinite wisdom saw fit to reveal to mankind, and which never could have been known to them had they not been revealed from heaven, for they were brought to pass before mankind were created.

We are here taught that there is ONE GOD the Creator of *Heaven and Earth*; that the world we live in had a beginning; that the ALMIGHTY, with infinite wisdom, formed the plan of creation, and brought into existence, by his WORD, the earth, with all its appendages and inhabitants, in a space of time amounting to six of what we call natural days. Each day's work is particularly described, by which we learn the progress of creation, and are led to reflect upon the various and wonderful works of GOD.

We find that the first act of creation, relating to this world, was, to bring out of nothing, a *chaos*, or *mass without form*, and *void* of every thing which now renders the earth a beautiful and convenient abode, and that this unformed world was wrapt up in darkness: yet we may conclude from what follows, that in its first state, this world contained the principles of metals, minerals, salts, vegetable substances, and all the terrestrial elements, which were intended to produce and renew whatever might be necessary for its future inhabitants; together with the rudiments of animal bodies, and in short all that is comprehended under the general name of *original matter*, one single particle of which, as philosophers demonstrate, can never be destroyed but by the CREATOR himself, though all may undergo various modifications to the end of time* As a chaos the

* See the History of the Heavens by the Abbé de la Pluche, vol. ii.

world was not habitable, but GOD by another astonishing act of almighty power, *divided the light from the darkness.*

Still the world was not fit for the reception of the living creatures, which GOD designed should dwell in it, so He divided the Waters which surrounded it, and caused a part of them to ascend and gather into clouds, that they might be in readiness to fall occasionally in rain, snow, and hail, to water and refresh the earth: beneath this body of waters GOD placed a *firmament of air*, that the living creatures when made might have a proper element to breathe in.

Overspread with the waters which remained below the firmament, the earth was unfit for the growth and nourishment of trees and plants. The CREATOR, therefore, collected the water together into a vast hollow, which he prepared to receive it, and so formed the *ocean*; the earthly particles at the same were consolidated into *dry land*, and appeared, as is supposed, under the different forms of plains and mountains, hills, dales, and valleys; between which the water flowed from the ocean, and became seas; metallic and mineral substances, and all that constitute the interior parts of the earth, were now, as we may conceive, arranged in different strata with perfect order, while the various plants were at the same time fashioning beneath in the earth, in the most wonderful manner, and dispersed in soils suited to their respective natures. Grass of various kinds then sprung up, and overspread the surface of the ground with its delightful verdure; innumerable plants, furnished with leaves and flowers, appeared among it, trees of every kind, clothed with leaves and blossoms, some bearing the most delicious fruits, adorned the earth, all bearing in themselves the seeds of future
trees

trees and plants, that no species might be lost to the end of the world, and bringing with them perhaps the first of all the insect tribes, destined to feed upon their leaves. It is worthy of observation, that the power of **GOD** produced these successive wonders before the operations of nature were regulated. The **CREATOR** wanted no *Sun* to dissolve the vegetable fluid, and animate his new creation; every tree and plant was made at once, perfect in its kind before it grew; but it was the will of the Almighty that the sun should be instrumental to the future growth and preservation of the vegetable tribes; and that this bright luminary, together with the moon, should serve to distinguish day and night, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and divide *Time*, till *Eternity* should succeed it, into months and years. For these purposes, extended in all probability to other revolving planets belonging to the solar system, **GOD**, either at this time created the sun or clearing our atmosphere, directed its invigorating rays, for the first time, to this earthly globe, and caused the moon and stars to appear in the firmament.

Having completed the formation of the heaven, the earth, and the waters, and prepared food of various kinds, **GOD** next called into being the *animal creation*. The waters above and below the Firmament, which were respectively impregnated with the *aerial* and *watery tribes*, at the command of the Creator, instantly sent forth different kinds of living creatures, *fowls of the air*, and *fishes of the sea*, in astonishing variety and abundance!

After the *air* and *waters* had produced their inhabitants, the *earth* by the **ALMIGHTY WORD** brought forth the different kinds of terrestrial creatures: all these were, like the fishes of the sea, and fowls of the

air, endued with animal life; and the CREATOR bestowed upon each species various instincts and faculties, to enable them to provide for themselves, and their future offspring, and to render them subservient to the use or pleasure of mankind.

But among all the inhabitants of the Earth, there was not one capable of admiring its wonderful construction, or of knowing the CREATOR; not one fit to be at the head of the Creation, to bear dominion or rule over the rest; therefore GOD made MAN a Being greatly superior to every other order of creatures in the world, for he was in the *Image of God*, he bore some faint resemblance to his Maker.

It is true that, like the other living creatures in the world, Man had an *earthly nature*; but he had also a *spiritual nature*, a *reasonable soul*, endued with a principle of immortal life, by the immediate inspiration of GOD, which accordingly bore the *divine IMAGE*.

Man was created with faculties for society and conversation, but with the animals he could not converse, because they possessed neither reason nor speech. This was known to the Creator, but not to Adam; every living thing therefore was led by a divine impulse to pass in review before their appointed Governor; and he was permitted to give names to them, which privilege still belongs to mankind. We here find that the first Man was named Adam; this name was given to him by the Creator, it signifies MAN.

Instead of creating out of the dust of the earth, the human being who was to be the companion of Adam, and to partake with him the blessings of creation and providence, GOD formed her of one of Adam's ribs, and Adam justly considered her as another *self*, and understood that it was his duty to love her with constancy

of

of affection. The name WOMAN, which Adam gave his Wife, shews, by its affinity to his own name, that he acknowledged her to be of the same nature with himself; and though it is not expressly mentioned, we may be certain that GOD breathed into the WOMAN as well as the MAN *the breath of life*, and she also *became a living Soul*, or she could not have been made in *the Image of GOD*.

The blessing which GOD bestowed upon the human pair, after he had created them, was like that before pronounced on the inferior creatures, but with this addition, that they were *to replenish the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fowls of the air, &c.* which signified that they had the privilege of cultivating the earth, and employing its productions for the various purposes of human life. At the same time mankind were instructed to regard all these gifts and privileges as bestowed by the SUPREME GOVERNOR, GOD, who himself allotted to man the food that was to sustain his life, which included all kinds of grain and fruits; and GOD made a particular grant of all that we call herbage, for the maintenance of the lower creatures; so that MAN could not withhold food from the cattle of the field, nor even from the meanest reptile, without manifest injustice. By this wise ordination, the dominion of MAN over the other creatures, though it set him greatly above them, kept him in due subordination to the SUPREME GOVERNOR.

All the works of creation, when viewed by the CREATOR, were pronounced GOOD; by which may be understood, that they were perfect in their kinds, so as to require no alteration or improvement; and it is remarked by those who have made the works of nature their particular study, that amidst the endless variety of the

vegetable and animal kinds, such analogy subsists as plainly shews they had all one MAKER, the all-wise GOD, who alone existed from all eternity. Of this incomprehensible Being we can know no more than He sees fit to reveal to us; but GOD has been graciously pleased to reveal many wonderful circumstances concerning his nature and attributes, and the laws by which he governs the universe. In respect to his Divine Nature, GOD has plainly revealed in Scripture that it includes Three persons, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, and that these three are ONE GOD; that the FATHER is *invisible*, that the SON is the *express Image* of the FATHER, through whom the FATHER receives the homage of Mankind. Nothing but DEITY can shew forth DEITY, a Being of an inferior nature cannot be the *express image* of a superior one; consequently whoever sees the SON, sees GOD, for there is no nature in him but GODHEAD. Mankind indeed were created in the *image and likeness* of GOD, they bore in their spiritual nature a faint resemblance of their CREATOR; but the SON of GOD, called in this lesson the LORD GOD, is that CREATOR. The HOLY GHOST is the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, of whose operations we are particularly informed in the New Testament; we read of Him in the very beginning of the Bible, where we are told that the SPIRIT of GOD *moved upon the face of the waters*; and it was by the same HOLY SPIRIT that *Man became a living soul*.

How wonderful it is to think of a self-existing and eternal Being, so wise and powerful as to be able to design the Works of Creation, and call into existence out of nothing the materials of which this Earth and all things belonging to it are composed; and of arranging them in such perfect order as to form a complete World,
furnished

furnished with innumerable kinds of inhabitants, and amply supplied with all things for the production and maintenance of a continued and multiplied succession of animate and inanimate creatures! Yet this World, admirable as it must appear to every considerate mind, is but a small part of that *universe*, which from the discoveries of astronomers we have reason to believe consists of innumerable suns, with their revolving planets, all created by the same Almighty Being! Who that reflects but a moment upon the infinite power and wisdom which were requisite to perform these astonishing works, can forbear to adore, with the most profound veneration, the great Author of them?

Why the Creator, who could have brought all things into existence instantaneously, chose to employ *six days* in creating his world, we are not told, but it is not improbable he did so, that attendant Angels might view them distinctly, and have new causes for adoration; and that Mankind in future ages, when they heard the history of creation, might be led to consider with particular attention the numberless benefits resulting to them from the various works of God, and glorify his holy name from day to day. A World brought to perfection in a *moment*, would have been an object too great for the contemplation even of the highest intellectual powers, and infinitely beyond the limited capacity of the human mind.

Let us imagine ourselves among the spectators of the wonderful scene exhibited in the gradual production of our earthly Globe, and its appendages. How grand and sublime was the first object of terrestrial creation, the *stupendous chaos*! How astonishing the effect of the CREATOR'S command, "*Let there be light!*" How wonderful the *division of the waters*, and the *consolidating*

of the earthy particles! How delightful the sight of Trees and Plants rising from the earth, and unfolding to view, in the course of a few hours, all the varieties of vegetable beauty! accompanied by innumerable kinds of insects, expanding as rapidly to their most perfect state! How astonishingly magnificent, even to celestial beings, the first sight of the sun, heightening with his resplendent beams all the charms of nature in one hemisphere of the globe; and the moon amidst the stars, shedding her mild reflected light on the other, and giving peculiar graces to every visible object! How truly interesting must it have been to witness the production of living creatures! To behold the seas swarming with innumerable fishes, both great and small; and the same watery element producing abundantly fowls and birds of all the different kinds which naturalists described! To observe the feathered tribes taking their winged flight in the aerial region, or perching among the branches; and to hear them from every leafy shrub pour forth their sweet melodious warblings! To see the huge elephant, the mighty lion, and all the beasts of the forest, rise from their parent earth, and mingle with the cattle of the field, and the reptile tribes! But what must have been the wonder and delight of Angels at beholding the last great work, the formation of MAN, a creature designed by Almighty Goodness to be their future associate, an inhabitant of heaven! Well might the sons of God, those benevolent Spirits who surround his throne, shout with joy, when the foundation of the earth was laid*! What then should be the sentiments of the human race, for whose use and pleasure these wonders were created? Ought they who are constant partakers of innumerable earthly blessings, who are endued with faculties by means

* Job xxxviii, 7.

of which they can understand from whose goodness they all proceed; ought, I say, these favoured creatures, who alone are capable of knowing their CREATOR, to slight His inestimable gifts, or misapply them to purposes directly contrary to the intention of the Almighty in bestowing them? Nothing can be more ungrateful than to pass over the Works of God without consideration. To study them is among the highest gratifications the human mind can enjoy, provided this study is conducted upon religious principles. The Book of Nature is open to all. "*On every Leaf* CREATOR GOD is written." Let us then daily employ some of those intervals of leisure which all may command, in examining those objects which fall under our immediate observation, and we shall find cause to say, with the inspired Psalmist, from the conviction of our own minds, "*O LORD, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches*!*" Let us also reflect with gratitude upon the wonderful condescension of the ALMIGHTY CREATOR, in imparting to MAN a portion of his own Spirit, to make him immortal, and render him a fit candidate for heavenly bliss, and let us endeavour, by all the means in our power, to preserve the *divine Image* in our souls, that we may be found in the *Likeness of God*.

It is reasonable to conclude, that at the first creation all was disposed for harmony and peace: impressed with the IMAGE OF THE DEITY, the souls of mankind were adorned with every mental perfection, and inclined by the HOLY SPIRIT to obey their Maker and shew benevolence to all the creatures over which they had dominion; the inferior creatures were individually impressed with an instinctive submission to the will of man, and with peaceable dispositions towards each other: so that MAN

* Psalm civ. 24.

might without danger caress the tyger and the wolf, or take the serpent to his bosom; and the lamb without fear lie down with the lion. Man had then no privilege to make sanguinary repasts upon the bodies of the animal tribes; neither were the animals at liberty to prey upon each other. What a delightful place must the earth have been at that time! Well might the CREATOR when he viewed his collective Works pronounce them good! Even now, that evil has such predominant influence, the world, as far as it respects the works of nature and Providence, is indisputably *good*; and much happiness may be enjoyed in it: the great privilege of *dominion* still continues with the human race, and gives them decided advantages over creatures vastly superior to themselves in strength. Mankind still continue to *replenish* and *subdue the earth*, whilst the beasts of the forest, and cattle of the field, still submit to his hand: ought not mankind then to observe the rules of justice towards the brute creation, by giving to all, under their immediate command, food in due season, and kind and merciful treatment? O let us never exercise cruelty upon the smallest creature that is within our power: but ever remember, that every thing which breathes is the object of divine benevolence; that they who would receive mercy from GOD, are expected to practise it towards all that have life; and that the truly *merciful man* will be *merciful to his beast*.

SECTION II.

OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH, AND GOD'S FIRST COVENANT WITH MANKIND.

From Genesis, Chap. ii.

THUS the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made : and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden ; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food : the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil.

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden : and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pison : that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there* is gold.

And the gold of that land is good : there is bdellium and the onyx-stone.

And the name of the second river is Gihon : the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river is Hiddekel : that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat :

But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the first chapter of Genesis, GOD is revealed to us in his DIVINE IMAGE as the CREATOR and GIVER of all things ; in this lesson we are taught to know GOD as the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the world, over which he had given man subordinate dominion.

It appears from other parts of Scripture *, that before the world was created GOD had prepared a kingdom in heaven, for the reception of such of the human race as should after a proper trial upon earth attain unto righteousness. That mankind might enjoy in some degree, during their state of probation, a foretaste of heavenly bliss, GOD *blessed the seventh day*, and *sanctified it*, or *made it holy*, by setting it apart as his own day. The day which the LORD saw fit thus to bless and sanctify, was that on which he *rested*, or left off creating the things belonging to this world, the day on which he viewed his own wonderful works, and pronounced them *good*.

As a further blessing to the first pair, the LORD GOD prepared a PARADISE for them ; a delightful abode, which was a lively type or figure of heaven ; for in it grew the TREE OF LIFE, and there they beheld the glorious IMAGE OF GOD. Under what form the LORD GOD appeared to the first pair we are not told ; but we may reasonably suppose, he shone forth in divine glory, not in awful majesty, as he afterwards appeared upon Mount Sinai, but with mild refulgence, as the Prophets describe him in their visions †, eminently distinguished from the highest of created Beings.

The exact situation of Paradise cannot now be known ; but, from the account we have of the rivers which flow-

* Matthew xxv. 34.

† See Ezekiel, i. 26, 27. Chap. viii. 2, 3. Dan. vii. 9. Also the visions of St. John, in the Apocalypse.

ed from the garden of Eden, it was in the eastern part of the world.

That the first pair might have no fears of being deprived of the blessings of Paradise, or erroneously suppose that they had a natural right to retain them, the LORD GOD graciously entered into a Covenant by which he asserted his own right as SUPREME GOVERNOR, and named the conditions on which the blessings of Paradise should be continued to mankind ; and these were the conditions of the covenant.—The LORD GOD gave mankind permission to enjoy freely all the blessings of Paradise, and promised to continue their lives as long as they should keep their part of the covenant ; and the LORD GOD commanded mankind not to eat of the *Tree of Knowledge*, which grew by the *Tree of Life*, and subjected them to the penalty of *Death*, in case they broke this Commandment. *The Tree of Life* was the outward and visible sign of God's *first Covenant* with mankind, in their state of innocence ; and the *Tree of Knowledge* was the test of man's obedience under this covenant.

The first Covenant certainly had a reference to a future state ; without it the utmost mankind could possibly have done, would have been to continue *innocent*, or free from sin, but they could not have become *righteous* through Faith and Obedience : and without *righteousness*, they could not have been admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

The LORD GOD by sanctifying the Seventh Day has made it the duty of mankind to keep it holy to the end of the world ; but we do not find that the Sabbath Law was included in the *first covenant* ; while mankind were innocent, no Commandment was necessary to enforce a remembrance of their CREATOR, for none but
sinners

sinners would forget the Lord who made them, and profane his Sabbath. The LORD GOD knew that it was not good for mankind to be idle; he therefore allotted them work for the six days of the week.

The institution of the Sabbath was the first spiritual blessing bestowed upon the human race; nothing could so effectually promote the happiness of mankind, even in a state of innocence, as the contemplation of the works of God; nothing could so properly prepare them for that heavenly bliss for which they were created, as holding communion with their CREATOR; offering up to God their pious adoration, and receiving from God those assurances of divine approbation, which in his infinite goodness He bestows on all who worship Him in spirit and in truth; though not in the same way they were bestowed in the beginning of the world. The obligation to keep the Sabbath holy, can never be annulled as long as the world endures; for as all mankind in successive generations partake of the blessings of creation, they are all bound to remember their Creator; and how can they testify this remembrance so properly as by keeping holy that day which he set apart as his own? It is the height of folly as well as presumption to slight and profane the Sabbath, and we cannot do so without offending God, and relinquishing the highest pleasures we are capable of enjoying on this side heaven. Let us then keep that divine commandment, which makes a part of the religion of christians; Let us *remember the Sabbath Day, and keep it Holy.*

Though mankind by means of that Reason with which their CREATOR had endued them were capable of *comprehending*, when once revealed to them, many things relating to the nature and attributes of God, they

they were not able by their own natural powers to *discover* them: they might have known indeed from the works of the creation that there must be a **GOD**; and with the rudiments of every good principle in their minds, they would undoubtedly have felt a desire to please their **MAKER**, whose *Image* they bore, and from whose bounty they received such manifold blessings; but they could not by *searching find out* **GOD***, nor were they left to form their own conjectures: *Divine Revelation* anticipated all fruitless inquiries, for before man could say, *Where is God my Maker?* the **LORD GOD** manifested forth the glory of the **ETERNAL FATHER**, and convinced the human race, by means of their outward senses, of the existence of a **God**! This was the beginning of *Divine Revelation*.

When the **DEITY** was once revealed to them, mankind, in their state of innocence and perfection, could not but desire to please **GOD**; intended by their Creator for immortal bliss, they would naturally wish for everlasting life; by their own natural powers they could neither learn the one, nor be assured of the other. But divine revelation was afforded to instruct them in the **LAW OF GOD**, to inform them that they were by nature mortal, and to intimate to them, that in order to have everlasting life, they must not merely continue *innocent*, but become *righteous*.

Not only in respect to spiritual things was divine revelation necessary to mankind: without it the first human pair would not have known how to select food, or choose a habitation for themselves; but before they could well feel the appetites of hunger and thirst, before they could well form a wish to enjoy in perfection the comforts and conveniences of the world, they were

* Job xi. 7.

put in possession of the Garden of Eden, in which was collected together, by divine bounty, *all that was pleasant to the eye and good for food.*

Without divine revelation mankind could not have known that the animals were in subjection to them; but before they could feel any fear or dread of creatures to all appearance more powerful than themselves, the LORD GOD said unto them, *Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air, and over every living thing, not excepting the huge elephant and the mighty leviathan!*

Divine revelation has been continued to all generations of mankind from the beginning of the world; without it they would have wandered in darkness and error, and never could have known the will of God and their own duty, neither could they have had well-grounded hopes of everlasting life and happiness. The methods employed by the Deity in communicating divine truths have been various, and adapted to the different conditions of mankind under different dispensations*. At present Christians enjoy the benefit of divine revelation in the HOLY SCRIPTURES. Let us then most thankfully avail ourselves of this inestimable benefit; let us read the Scriptures with reverence, as the WORD OF GOD, and be ever ready to improve, with diligence, all that the goodness of GOD has made known to us; remembering that we can neither call in question the truth of GOD'S WORD, nor wilfully act in opposition to it, without risking our eternal salvation.

* Heb. i. 1.

SECTION III.

ON THE FALL OF MAN,

From Genesis, Chap. iii.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made: and he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, I we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die.

For GOD doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the garden, in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD GOD, amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD GOD called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.

And

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the LORD GOD said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

And the LORD GOD said unto the Serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

And unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD GOD make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And

And the LORD GOD said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil : and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever :

Therefore the LORD GOD sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man, and he placed in the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When God entered into covenant with mankind, *life* and *death* were set before them ; it depended upon themselves whether they would live for ever, or become subject to death : as long as they should refrain from eating of the forbidden fruit, they would, according to the *divine covenant*, be entitled to live and remain in Paradise, for so long they would be *innocent* or free from *sin* ; but *innocence* alone would not entitle them to a farther reward. In order to obtain *heavenly bliss* and *immortal life*, it was requisite that they should become *righteous*, which they could only do by testifying their *Faith* and *Obedience*, when tempted to disbelieve the WORD OF GOD, and disobey His COMMANDMENTS.

Mankind are not the only intellectual beings among God's creatures ; there are above them many orders of angels, the original inhabitants of heaven ; and we learn from Scripture, that some of these superior intelligences kept not their first estate, but rebelled against God and provoked him to cast them out from Heaven, and condemn them to eternal banishment from his glorious presence. These are denominated *fallen angels*, and *devils* ; and we are told in Scripture that their
number

number is very considerable. The chief of the fallen angels is called, by way of eminence, **THE DEVIL**, and he is distinguished by the name of **SATAN**, which signifies an *adversary* or *accuser*.

The particular crime for which the fallen angels were cast out of Heaven, is not expressly mentioned; but from some texts of Scripture, we are led to suppose, that Satan set himself against the **LORD GOD**, and refused to pay homage to him; and that the other rebellious spirits united under him as their head. **SATAN** thus became the declared enemy of God, and his adherents followed his wicked example. It pleased God that the final punishment of the devil and his angels should be deferred till the end of this world; in the mean time they were left at liberty to *tempt* mankind, who, without temptation, could not have had an opportunity of testifying their Faith and Obedience; and God had ordained that, unless they did so, they should not be admitted into heaven, where an eternal reward was provided for the righteous only. The Devil, envious of the happiness of the first human pair, and desirous of establishing a kingdom for himself, in opposition to that prepared for the righteous, resolved to try if he could not tempt them to break God's commandment. Whether mankind knew that there were such beings as the devil and his angels, we are not told; but they certainly were endued with reason, and their will was left perfectly free, either to obey God's commandment, or to break it; and they knew the conditions of the covenant to be, "*Obey and live,*" or "*Eat, and die.*"

Satan had not the power to force mankind to sin, and he knew, that if he attacked them openly, he should raise suspicion; so he resolved to proceed by
cunning

cunning and artifice. The Serpent appeared to him a proper instrument for his diabolical purpose, on account of its wonderful cunning, or sagacity ; and by a power which, as a spirit, the devil possessed, he entered into the body of this reptile, and addressed himself to the woman, as the most likely of the two to be deceived. Without doubt the woman was greatly surprised when she heard the Serpent address her in a way, she had reason to think, peculiar to the human kind, and to find he was acquainted with God's covenant with man ; and she gave too ready attention to his seducing words ! The discourse of the Serpent was designed to tempt the woman to disbelieve the word of God, to desire what God had forbidden, and to disobey his commandment. For every reasonable desire that mankind could with innocence indulge, God had graciously provided ; and as much knowledge as was conducive to their happiness, God bestowed by means of *divine revelation* ; surely then it was their duty to be contented with the condition of human nature, which was the most honourable of any in this world. To wish to eat of what God had expressly *forbidden*, was an *unlawful appetite* ; to wish to be as Gods, or even as ANGELS, was an *unlawful desire*, neither of which they could gratify without committing Sin. Reason was bestowed upon the human race, to regulate their appetites and desires ; and had they made proper use of their reason, the *first pair* would not have committed Sin. When the MAN eat of the fruit of the *Tree of Knowledge*, he broke the COVENANT made with him as the head of the human race, he corrupted human nature, so that its goodness was lost ; and he forfeited not for himself only but for all that should proceed from him all the blessings of Paradise, together with everlasting life,

and a title to a heavenly inheritance. The WOMAN was in the transgression and justly partook of the punishment. When they had eaten of the forbidden fruit *the eyes* of the first pair were *indeed opened*, as the Devil promised them, but the effects of their disobedience were very different from the expectations raised by the Serpent, all the *knowledge* they had gained was, that *they were naked*, or, in other words, that they had forfeited the Divine protection, and incurred the just anger of their maker. The minds of both were now filled with the most dreadful apprehensions, and, to avoid the vengeance of an offended GOD, they endeavoured (but in vain) to hide themselves from His all-seeing eye.

The case of the wretched pair was now quite hopeless, all the blessings of Paradise were forfeited, and even life itself; they could make no amends to the CREATOR and GOVERNOR of the world for spoiling his perfect work, and defacing his Divine Image in their souls; they had no reason to expect GOD would freely forgive the breach of his commandment; neither had they a friend to whom they could apply to intercede for them, — but DEATH, EVERLASTING DEATH appeared their certain portion; nor could they tell how soon the fatal stroke would fall upon them. Such was the miserable condition of the *first pair* when they *fell from innocence*, and became *sinner*s. But the all merciful CREATOR, who foresaw their fall even before they were created, had provided for their Salvation; a Redeemer was ordained for them ere they came into existence, and a NEW COVENANT prepared, suited to the condition of sinners, a COVENANT OF GRACE, under which *Repentance* and *Faith* were to be accepted in the room of *perfect obedience*.

Into this Covenant GOD of his infinite goodness called

ed the offenders, even while they were trembling for fear of his anger ; but before the Lord intimated to them the purposes of *divine grace* : he gave both Adam and Eve the opportunity of acknowledging that they had broken his commandment. After this confession the LORD GOD pronounced sentence upon all the transgressors ; first on the Serpent, as the most atrocious offender ; next on Eve, as the first transgressor ; and last of all on Adam, who, as the first human creature, was the head of his kind from whence all the rest were to proceed.

The former part of God's sentence upon the Serpent related to the kind of creature which Satan had made use of as his instrument. By degrading the Serpent from its original state in the creation, and making it an emblem of infernal spite and malice, the Lord God in fact punished the Devil himself ; for the serpent, not being possessed of reason, could not be sensible of the alteration it had undergone, and might be as happy crawling in the dust as in a higher condition ; but this alteration reflected perpetual disgrace and ignominy upon the Devil. The latter part of the sentence on the serpent related entirely to Satan, and signified that the Redeemer of mankind, who at God's appointed time was to be born of a woman, should put an end to the power of the Devil.

As for the woman, she was sentenced to bring forth children in sorrow, which implied, that an increase of the human race would be the cause of pain and anxiety to her ; she was also to be in subjection to her husband, as a punishment for acting in so material a point without him, and taking advantage of his tenderness, to draw him into sin.

While Man continued innocent the earth had yielded

him spontaneous nourishment, prepared by the providence of GOD. The ground was now cursed for his sake, the blessing of God was cut off from it, that Man might be obliged to labour hard for his subsistence, and instead of the delicious fruits of Paradise, he was condemned to eat the herb of the field.

But that the human race might still be distinguished from the brutes, over whom dominion was given them, it pleased God to suggest to their reason means of rendering the fruits of the field more palatable and wholesome to their nature, by making some of them into bread*.

The first pair certainly became subject to *everlasting death*, both of body and soul, from the moment they eat the forbidden fruit; but the Almighty graciously resolved to save mankind from *everlasting death*, and condemned them only to *the death of the body*; the *earthly part* was to *return to the dust*, but no sentence of condemnation was passed upon the *spiritual part of man*, the *Soul*; a dreadful alteration indeed had taken place in it, the Image of God was defaced, but that was the work of men through the instigation of the Devil, it was the work of *divine Grace* to renew the soul unto holiness through the satisfaction of a REDEEMER, and by the sanctification of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Mankind were now taken into a *new Covenant*, a *Covenant of Grace*, under which *their Mediator, the seed of the woman*, was to perform what divine justice required for the sins of mankind, which is fully explained in the New Testament.

*“ Every good gift and every perfect gift (says St. James) is from above, and cometh down from the FATHER OF LIGHT.” It is no improbable conjecture, therefore, that the thought of making corn into bread was originally suggested by Divine inspiration.

From

From what we ourselves experience of the condition of humanity, since mankind learnt to know *evil* as well as *good*, we may be certain, that everlasting life, under such circumstances, would be a misfortune, instead of a blessing.

It is supposed that, before the *Fall of man*, beasts had multiplied; and that God, in consideration of the penitence of mankind, delayed the execution of the penalty of death; and commanded Adam to kill some, and offer them in sacrifice, as an acknowledgement that he and his wife were deserving of death, and only respited for a time by God's mercy. And it is probable, that God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of these beasts, to shew them in a figurative way, that as clothes covered their bodies, so sacrifices, offered according to God's own appointment, would, in some sense, cover and protect them from the punishment which their sin had deserved*.

Of the manner in which these sacrifices were offered, we may form an idea from the account given by Moses, of the Jewish sacrifices, which were in fact a renewal of them.

The expulsion of mankind from Paradise was attended with great solemnity. The LORD GOD banished them himself from the *Tree of Life*, and placed some of the heavenly host as guards to prevent their future approach to it. All we know of the nature of the Cherubim is from the prophetic writings†.

From the history of the Fall of our first Parents, we learn the great danger of indulging unlawful appetites and desires. This should make us careful not to desire any thing merely because it appears *pleasant to our eyes*,

* Dr. Watts's View of Scripture History.

† See Ezek. i. 5. et seq.

or good for food; and to consider first whether it be consistent with our duty to wish for it before we indulge ourselves with it. We may further learn from the Fall of the first human kind, to keep our desires for *knowledge*, within due bounds; and in respect to spiritual and divine things, to be contented with what it has pleased God to *reveal*; and we should likewise learn from their sad fate, to be satisfied with the condition of human nature.

The CREATOR has made many different orders of beings, and placed them in different ranks, according to his good pleasure; it is therefore sinful to wish to be any other kind of creature than we are; and still more so, to be envious of the perfections of God himself.

Since the Devil suggested wickedness to our first parents, and the Scriptures inform us, that he is the professed enemy of mankind in general, we must endeavour to guard our minds against his artful insinuations. Whenever we find in our hearts any inclinations contrary to our own duty, we should immediately have recourse to God by prayer, that he may by his grace enable us to overcome the *evil one*, who will flee away if thus resisted.

From the behaviour of our first parents, immediately after they had disobeyed God's command, we see that Sin naturally leads to shame and fear; we may also perceive, that mere *Human Reason* cannot give to sinners any certain hope of pardon, much less of immortality; therefore instead of seeking to justify ourselves, and claiming forgiveness, and eternal life, as our natural right, we should be ready to confess our sins, and rely on divine mercy for pardon, which God, after the fall, graciously promised to all mankind, as his own free gift, through the *seed of the woman*, who alone can bruise the Serpent's head.

The

The *first* Covenant was not renewed to mankind after the fall ; all the descendants of Adam are heirs to the *second* only, and have not by *nature* any right to the hope of life eternal. This is the gift of God through the *seed of the woman*, our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It does not become us to murmur and repine, that we have not the same privileges as Adam and Eve had at first ; for in all probability we should have abused them as they did. It is true, that the *Tree of Life* is not within our reach. Death is entered into the world, and every one that is born must submit to it ; but immortal happiness is still attainable, and we may learn the conditions of it from the Scriptures ; let us therefore, with thankful hearts, acknowledge the Divine goodness to fallen man ; submit with patient resignation to the natural evils of humanity, and even to death itself ; since God has provided a remedy, which will prevent our spiritual enemy from effecting our final destruction, if we comply with the terms of salvation.

SECTION IV.

THE DEATH OF ABEL.

From Genesis, Chap. iv.

AND Eve bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

And she again bare his brother Abel, and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof ; and the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.

But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect; and Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And to thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore every one that slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven fold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

And

And Cain's wife bare Enoch, and he builded a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and Adam's wife bare a son, and she called his name Seth : for God, said she, hath given me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.

And to Seth there was also a son born, and he called his name Enos ; then began men to call themselves by the name of the LORD*.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In this section we have a convincing proof that the Devil continued his temptations after the fall, and that he artfully adapted them to the circumstances of mankind. Under the first covenant he tempted them to eat of the *Tree of Knowledge* ; he afterwards tempted them to depart from the *Ordinances of God*, by means of which they might attain to the Righteousness that cometh by Faith. He also tempted them to the indulgence of every unlawful desire, and to the practice of every kind of wickedness.

Abel seems to have been of an amiable, religious disposition. Cain, on the contrary, of a morose, unthankful temper. But the particular cause of his inveterate hatred to his brother was, that the LORD God had rejected his sacrifice, and accepted Abel's. There is reason to suppose (as we observed before) that sacrifices were appointed of God himself, because, before the fall, Man was not allowed to kill any thing for food : in Eden he lived upon fruits, therefore it is not likely that he would have thought of appeasing the anger of God, by killing an innocent creature : but, as the AL-

* See the margin of the Bible.

MIGHTY was pleased to reveal to Adam and Eve his gracious purpose of sending *a restorer of righteousness*, it is likely that he instituted the rite of sacrificing animals, as a representation of the great sacrifice to be made by CHRIST, and as a mean whereby mankind might express *faith* or *belief* in the promises of GOD; for these purposes (it is presumed) GOD commanded them to offer unto Him some of the fruits of the earth, as an acknowledgment of their dependence on Him; and some of their flocks, as a sacrifice for sin; and, that as a mark of His acceptance, GOD sent fire from Heaven to consume the offering: thus by accepting the innocent victim in their stead, GOD intimated that He would pardon their transgressions, for the sake of their Redeemer, if they testified their *Repentance* and *Faith* in the way he appointed.

It is strongly implied in this section, that the LORD GOD continued to manifest his Divine presence to mankind, after the fall; and, it is no improbable conjecture, that some peculiar spot was sanctified by His appearance. Let us, then, suppose, that Cain and Abel repaired to this holy ground*, and offered their sacrifices. Cain's consisted only of some fruits of the earth; from which we may infer, that he presumed to appear before GOD *as a just person, wanting no repentance*, but merely acknowledging GOD's goodness and bounty. Abel, conscious of his own imperfections, offered of the firstlings of his flock, as the *sacrifice of atonement* agreeably to the divine institution, by which he testified his repentance and his *faith*, in the promises and appointments of GOD: this *Faith* rendered *his* Sacrifice acceptable †; the want of it occasioned Cain's to be re-

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

† Heb. xi. 4.

jected. That Cain might not plead ignorance, it pleased the LORD to point out the omission, and to remind him, that he had not made the proper offering for sin; but, instead of repairing his fault, Cain went away in wrath; and though the LORD GOD had reproved him for his discontent and envy with the utmost mildness, Cain continued to indulge those baneful passions, till they brought him to commit the horrid crime of fratricide! In all this we may perceive the work of the Devil, who suited his temptations to the circumstances of mankind.

So great was the pride of Cain, that he could not bear a superior, even in the favour of GOD; what then must have been his mortification to find himself the most abject of mankind; banished to a distant land, far from that hallowed spot, which was then distinguished by the frequent appearance of the LORD GOD; and destitute of that *faith*, which is the only sure foundation of *hope*? Sensible, in part, of his wretched condition, Cain particularly lamented, that he was driven from the *face of the LORD*; and expressed the most dreadful apprehensions, that the hand of every one would be ready to cut him off: yet he disdained (as it seems) to conciliate the favour of GOD by offering the sacrifice of atonement, nor did he express remorse for the wicked action he had committed: however, it pleased the LORD, not only to spare his life, but to threaten that he would punish whoever should take upon himself to kill Cain, because it would be presumption to alter the sentence of GOD, who thought proper to prolong the days of the first who was guilty of murder, in order (as we may suppose) to make him a living example of the unhappiness which follows the commission of this dreadful crime; and also to give him time for repentance.

As Abel was evidently in favour with God, we cannot suppose, that he was abandoned to the rage of his brother as a *punishment*; on the contrary, we may regard his early death, in reference to Providence, as a mark of the Divine approbation; and may reasonably conclude, that as he testified a true faith, he was after death received into a better world.

The Scripture is silent in respect to the sorrow of Adam and Eve on this mournful occasion; but, without doubt, it must have been a great affliction to them, to lose a beloved son by the unnatural hand of his own brother; and to have the offender condemned to drag on a wretched life, under the displeasure of God, and the contempt of mankind; and the sorrow of Adam was certainly greatly aggravated by the reflection, that he had brought Death upon the human race. In respect to the mark that was set upon Cain, there is no certainty; but some learned authors think, that the verse which mentions it is not exactly translated, and that it should be rendered, *set a mark before Cain*; that is, wrought some miracle or sign, to assure him that he should not be slain: however it was, it will answer no purpose to puzzle ourselves with such questions as these, which are merely matter of curiosity, as none of Cain's posterity are now remaining in the world.

Though none of the children of Adam and Eve are mentioned by their names in the Bible, excepting Cain, Abel, and Seth, it is certain that they had others before the murder of Abel, because we read of Cain's wife, who must have been the daughter of Adam and Eve. According to calculations that have been made, it is probable, that, by the time Adam was 130 years old, there might be of his children, grand-children, and great grand-children, a great number of people in the world.

world*. Seth is particularly mentioned, because, from him was to descend, in a regular succession, the SAVIOUR of mankind, *the promised seed of the woman*.

At the end of this section we read, that after the birth of Enos, *men began to call themselves by the name of the LORD*; from this expression, compared with the beginning of section vii. we are led to think, that all those, who believed in the Divine Promises solemnly devoted themselves to the service of the LORD, and expressed their Faith by offering the sacrifices which he had appointed; on which account the LORD GOD adopted them as His *sons*, sanctified and assisted them by his HOLY SPIRIT, and gave them a title to the heavenly inheritance intended to be purchased for the human race, by the Restorer of Righteousness.

Much practical instruction may be collected from this history of Cain and Abel. In the first place, we may infer from it, that the public prayers (which are now in the place of the sacrifices) are not acceptable to God from persons who harbour hatred and malice in their minds. We may also learn, that wicked actions, however secretly committed, cannot be hidden from God; and that the SUPREME BEING Himself is the avenger of murder, and will bring it to light by some means or other; or at least, will not suffer a *murderer* to know that inward peace which arises from a quiet conscience. The fear and dread of discovery alone must have been a continual torment to him, and will compel him to flee from place to place.—We are likewise taught, that to be driven from the *face of the LORD*, or to be cut off from the Society of God's people, and deprived of the blessing of communion with God, in social worship, as a

* See Stackhouse on the Bible.

murderer must necessarily be, is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted.

Brothers and Sisters are particularly instructed by this portion of Scripture, to cherish from their early years an affectionate attachment to each other, which, by its endearments, will prove a source of continual comfort and pleasure ; by repeated acts of kindness they may secure to themselves a set of faithful, disinterested friends, ready on all occasions to do them good offices ; and they will have the additional satisfaction of increasing the felicity of their parents. But those, who indulge selfishness of mind, and are continually studying how to obtain a preference to themselves, and are envious of the superior advantages of their brothers and sisters, commit great offence against God, are enemies to society, by destroying the peace of families, and cannot expect to be esteemed or beloved.

SECTION V.

THE GENEALOGY FROM ADAM, IN THE LINE OF SETH,
TO THE TIME OF THE DELUGE.

From Genesis, Chap. v.

THIS is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him : male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

ADAM lived an hundred and thirty years, and had a son in his own likeness, after his image ; and called his name SETH : and the days of Adam after the birth of Seth, were eight hundred years : and he had sons and daughters : and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years ; and he died.

And SETH lived an hundred and five years, and had ENOS : and Seth lived after the birth of Enos eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters :
and

and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years : and he died.

And ENOS lived ninety years, and had CAINAN : and Enos lived after the birth of Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters : and the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years : and he died.

And CAINAN lived seventy years, and had MAHALALEEL : and Cainan lived after the birth of Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years : and he died.

And MAHALALEEL lived sixty and five years, and had JARED : and Mahalaleel lived after the birth of Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years : and he died.

And JARED lived an hundred sixty and two years, and had ENOCH : and Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years : and he died.

And ENOCH lived sixty and five years, and had METHUSELAH : and Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years : and Enoch walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him.

And METHUSALEH lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and had LAMECH : and Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Methusaleh were nine hundred and sixty nine years : and he died.

And LAMECH lived an hundred eighty and two years, and had a son : and he called his name NOAH, saying,
This

This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. And Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and had sons and daughters : and all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy and seven years : and he died.

And NOAH was five hundred years old : and Noah had three sons, SHEM, HAM, and JAPHETH.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The design of this section is to shew the regular descent from Adam to Noah, with a view to preserve the genealogy of the *promised seed*.

The *generations of Adam* signify his children, grand-children, and all who proceeded from him in the line of SETH, that son of his from whom the Redeemer of the world was to proceed. We find that the CREATOR called each of the first human pair by one common name, ADAM, which signified MAN ; it was the first man that called his wife *Woman*, to denote that she belonged to mankind, and afterwards gave her the proper name of EVE, which has served to distinguish her from all other women. In the first verse of this section it is said, that God created man *in his own Image*, but it is said of Seth that he was in the *likeness or Image of Adam* : from which we may understand, that there was a great alteration in human nature in consequence of *the Fall*. What is to be understood by the *Image of God*, has been already explained ; this Divine Image was defaced by sin. Adam was a sinner, subject to pain, sorrow, and death : his children being *in his image*, were just such creatures as himself, excepting that they were innocent of his particular offence, but they partook of the corruption of his nature.

We do not read that Adam and Eve were guilty of
any

any capital crimes after they left Paradise, and may therefore suppose, that the general tenour of their conduct was agreeable to the will of God, and that they educated their children in the principles of true religion. It pleased the LORD to spare Adam's life for a length of years; and in all probability Eve also lived to a good old age, but they must have felt severely the evils which their disobedience first brought into the world: however, as they still enjoyed the advantages of an immediate intercourse with the LORD GOD, it is reasonable to think, that they were comforted with hopes of enjoying, through his infinite mercy, that happiness in a future state, which they had lost in this.

It is said of Enoch that he *walked with God*. By this expression we may understand, that Enoch complied with all the commandments and ordinances of God. What these ordinances were we are not told, but from the foregoing chapter we are led to suppose, that they consisted partly in *Sacrifices* offered with *Repentance*, and *Faith in God's mercy*.

The Son of Sirach * tells us, that Enoch left to all generations an example of repentance, and the Apostle informs us that he was translated, or taken to heaven without dying, on account of his faith, and that before his translation he had this testimony, namely, *that he pleased God* †.

Methuselah was the oldest man that ever lived. Longevity must have been a great blessing to mankind, while they lived good lives, and enjoyed healthy constitutions; but, according to the present state of the world, it would be an intolerable evil. Lamech, the father of Noah, pronounced a remarkable prophecy at the birth of his son—*This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD*

* Eccl. xliv. 16.

† Heb. xi. 5.

hath cursed. From this prediction, it is supposed *,
 “ That the curse upon the ground, pronounced at the
 Fall, subsisted in all its rigour to the days of Lamech ;
 that the work and toil necessary to raise from the
 ground a sufficient support for life, was a grievous and
 irksome burden ; and that there was an expectation in
 his time, at least among those who had not quite for-
 gotten God, of a deliverance from the curse of the Fall ;
 of which deliverance Lamech understood his son Noah
 would be the instrument. We shall see, as we proceed,
 in what manner this prediction was completed.

The birth of Noah happened in the eleventh century
 after the fall.

We find from this section, that though men lived,
 in the first ages of the world, a great number of years,
 they all died at last, excepting Enoch, who was mira-
 culously translated ; yet we are not told of any parti-
 cular crimes they committed, for which death was in-
 flicted as a punishment. The truth is, that they all
 died in consequence of Adam’s sin †. *The condemna-
 tion of death* had passed upon mankind before any of
 th sons of Adam were born. *God concluded them all
 as sinners*, before they came into the world, that they
 might all partake of Redemption ‡.

Since all mankind are born with a corrupt nature, in
 the image of their progenitor Adam, instead of the
Image of God, we should learn to think humbly of our-
 selves, and highly of the mercy and goodness of God,
 who has condescended to take such creatures as sinful
 men into covenant with himself : and we should ear-
 nestly desire to be purified from the original corruption
 of our nature, and to have the *Image of God* renewed
 in our minds by Divine Grace §.

* See Bishop Sberlock on Prophecy.

† 1 Cor. xv. 22.

‡ Rom. xi. 32. Gal. iii. 22. § 2 Cor. 15, 16. Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24.

SECTION VI.

THE GENEALOGY FROM CAIN.

From Genesis, Chap. iv.

AND Cain's wife bare ENOCH, and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch. And unto Enoch was born IRAD, and unto IRAD, MEHUJAEI, and unto MEHUJAEI, METHUSAEL, and unto METHUSAEL, LAMECH.

And LAMECH took unto him two wives : the name of the one was ADAH, and the name of the other ZILLAH. And ADAH bare JABAL : he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was JUBAL : he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And ZILLAH she also bare TUBAL-CAIN, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron : and the sister of TUBAL-CAIN was NAAMAH.

And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice ; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech ; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged seven fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Lamech, the descendent of Cain, is supposed to have been the first man who had two wives : he is thought by some to have killed Cain ; but it rather appears, from the text, that he had slain another person, and was fearful God would inflict a greater punishment upon him than he had on the first murderer, because he had presumed to kill a man, notwithstanding he had seen the evil consequences which the perpetration of murder brought upon Cain.

There is great similarity of names in the descendants of Seth and Cain ; we must therefore be careful not to confound one with the other.

It is remarked, that, in this genealogy, there is not one good person pointed out; but several of Cain's race became famous for useful and curious arts, which shews, that God does not confine this kind of knowledge to the best people; therefore, it is wrong for any person to value himself merely upon his skill in human arts and sciences; it is the proper application of talents, to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, that can alone render any one truly estimable.

SECTION VII.

THE BUILDING OF NOAH'S ARK.

From Genesis, Chap. vi.

AND it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

That the Sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his day shall be an hundred and twenty years.

There were giants in the earth in those days, and also after that; the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *the whole imagination, purposes, and desires* * of his heart were only evil continually.

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart.

And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast and the creeping thing, and the fowl of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.

* See margin of the Bible.

But

But Noah found grace in the sight of the LORD. Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold I will destroy them with the earth.

Make thee an ark, of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

A window shalt thou make to the ark and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the doors of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life from under heaven: and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

But with thee will I establish my covenant: and thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee: they shall be male and female.

Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind: two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and the female.

Thus

Thus did Noah: according that all to God commanded him, so did he.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Seth continued to dwell in that part of the world, which was distinguished by the visible presence of the LORD GOD, worshipped him as the Creator and Governor of the World, offered the Sacrifices which He appointed, kept in mind the promise of a Restorer of Righteousness, and brought up his family in the true religion. We may also suppose, that the rest of Adam's posterity (except the unnatural branch that was cut off) followed the example of Seth: these then were the *sons of God*; and Cain and his family, with such as apostatized from the LORD GOD, and joined with them, the *sons of men*.

It is here intimated, that the *sons of God* were at first very careful to keep themselves separate from the *sons of men*; but after a time, they married wives from amongst them. This mixture of good and wicked people was productive of very bad consequences. It is most likely that these *daughters of men*, and their impious relations, enticed to idolatry the *sons of God*, who had married them; and these by degrees enticed others. The author of the Book of Wisdom says, *that the devising of idols was the beginning of the corruption of life**. And St. Paul says, that *when men knew God they glorified him not as God; but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, into birds and beasts, and creeping things†*; from which we may infer, that the sin of Idolatry, in the first instance, consisted in men's dishonouring the LORD GOD, the *express Image of the ETERNAL FATHER*, by setting up images of their own devising in his stead, which by

* Wisdom of Solomon, xiv. 12. † Rom. i. 23.

degrees they fancied so many separate deities. This may justly be imputed to the suggestion of the Devil.

Such a race of people, as the antediluvians are described to have been, were unfit to live; therefore, we cannot wonder that they were at last destroyed; but we find, that the long-suffering of God was very great; for he mercifully delayed, for an hundred and twenty years, the judgment he intended to bring upon them. —By the expression, *my Spirit shall not always strive with men, &c.* we may understand, that means of grace were offered to this people; but they resisted the HOLY SPIRIT, that is, gave way to their own vicious inclinations, when good thoughts were suggested to them*.

GOD is a being of infinite perfection, and not subject to conflicting passions; so that by *His repenting that he had made man*, and being *grieved at his heart*, we are to understand no more, than that GOD's patience and long suffering had exceeded the utmost indulgence mankind had reason to expect; and that He had determined, at His own appointed time, to inflict the punishment due to their wickedness. GOD, however, did not bring a sudden destruction on the earth; for he made his purpose known to Noah and commanded him to inform mankind of it, and to preach *righteousness* to them; by righteousness is to be understood faith in GOD's promises, repentance, and amendment of life, and strict adherence to the true worship of the LORD GOD. Had mankind obeyed Noah's admonitions, they would have been preserved; for it was the original appointment of GOD (as we may understand from many passages of Scripture) that general and sincere repentance should avert public judgments†.

We are not to suppose, that Noah was a man entirely free from sin; without doubt he was, like others, sub-

* 2 Pet. ii. 5. † Joel ii. 13. Dan. ix. 9, 10. 1 John. i. 8, 9.

ject to human infirmities ; but in respect to his FAITH, he was *perfect* ; for even the example of the whole race of mankind could not draw him from his belief and trust in the LORD GOD ; and he testified this faith by a ready *obedience* to God's command of building an Ark, for the preservation of himself and his family*. The expression *walking with God*, signifies a conformity to God's *Divine Ordinances*, in preference to human inventions.

If GOD had not made known his intention of destroying the earth and its inhabitants, Noah might have supposed the Deluge to be the effect of chance ; and after he received this intimation, had he been left to the guidance of *human reason* alone, he would have been utterly at a loss to know what to do in such an emergency, for ships had not yet been invented ; and we can scarcely think, that the idea of building a vessel to float on the surface of the water would have occurred to his mind : he therefore found the benefit of Divine direction, even in his worldly affairs ; nor was this benefit confined to him ; instructed by his history, mankind have learnt, that under the providence of GOD *they may commit their lives to a small piece of wood, and pass the rough sea in a weak vessel*†.

It is supposed that the ark was built something in the form of a house, with a sloping covering like a roof, for the wet to run off. Noah had not occasion for sails, rudder, or compass, because no art of man was requisite for the preservation of his vessel ; these useful appendages were successively added to ships, as the necessities or experience of mankind led to improvement in the art of navigation.

It would have been difficult for Noah, who was ignorant how many species of creatures the world contained, to calculate the requisite size of the ark : he would

* Heb. xi. 7. † Wisdom of Solomon xiv. 5.

likewise, in all probability, have been at a loss to know what materials to make use of, without God's direction; neither could he have known what quantity of food to provide; and after all, it would have been out of his power to collect the different creatures together, had not GOD caused them to come instinctively, as those first created went to Adam.

We read, that Noah was commanded to make a window in the ark: of this we shall speak in a succeeding section. The covenant, which God promised to establish with Noah, was that made with Adam after the fall*, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.*

The clean beasts are supposed to have been those made use of in sacrifices: the unclean, those which were never to be applied to such sacred purposes.

From this section we learn, the great danger to which religious people expose themselves, by marrying among wicked ones; and that, in forming matrimonial connections, regard should rather be had to goodness of disposition, than to personal beauty.

We also learn, that the lives of mankind are entirely at the disposal of GOD; therefore it is folly to expect length of days according to the course of nature, and to put off repentance to a future period: and, by the fate of the giants, who perished with the rest, we understand, that extraordinary strength and stature are no securities against Divine vengeance.

We are further instructed, that the power of GOD is unlimited, and that the elements are entirely under his command.

If we are ready to condemn the antediluvians for not regarding the admonitions of Noah, let us listen with

* See Section iii.

reverence and attention to the instructions, which are given to us by God's ministers; and be careful not to do any thing contrary to His will, contained in the Holy Scriptures.

SECTION VIII.

THE FLOOD.

From Genesis, Chap. vii.

AND the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

And

And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

In the self same day entered Noah and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark :

They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him : and the Lord shut him in.

And the flood was forty days upon the earth ; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.

And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth ; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth ; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered.

Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail ; and the mountains were covered.

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man :

All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We are told by the Apostle to the Hebrews, that Noah's righteousness, which was accepted of God, consisted in true *Faith**; that is, Noah believed all that God had at that time revealed concerning the Redeemer, and lived agreeably to this belief.

Nothing could be more unlikely to happen, according to the common course of nature, than an universal deluge: yet Noah, actuated by a religious fear†, having prepared every thing as God commanded, entered into the ark with all his family; which was a striking proof of his belief of God's power, and confidence in the Divine promises. Though it is not mentioned, we may conclude that he had taught his family the same principles; for without such a reliance on the ALMIGHTY, what would have been their apprehensions, when the doors of the ark were shut upon them?

We may easily suppose, that the rest of the inhabitants of the earth ridiculed Noah, for what appeared to them unnecessary precautions. They foresaw no danger, but pursued their voluptuous pleasures, till the flood came and found them feasting and revelling, marrying and giving in marriage‡.

* Heb. xi. 7.

† Ibid.

‡ See Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

There is reason to think, that the deluge began on the seventh day of week ; if so, it was, in all probability, intended as a judgment upon the antediluvians, for their habitual profanation of the Sabbath.

In order to shew, that the deluge did not happen according to the common course of nature, but was the effect of the miraculous power of God, we are told by what means it was brought about.

In the history of the creation* we read, that God divided the waters from the waters, and placed a firmament betwixt them, &c.

In order to destroy the earth, the ALMIGHTY let loose the waters, and shewed, that it is his Providence alone, which renders that element an invaluable blessing, which, not confined within due bounds, is capable of becoming a most destructive evil.

What a melancholy sight would it have been to Noah and his family, to behold the destruction of all living creatures, and to see the earth in ruins ! But there is reason to believe that they had not this severe trial. The ark (as we learn from a former section †) had no windows in the sides, and only one window at the top, of small dimensions. This could not be designed to convey light ; nor, indeed, could any window, wherever situated, have answered this purpose, to a vesse consisting of three stories, even if the sun had shone forth with resplendent brightness, much less when the sky was constantly obscured with clouds. It is therefore probable, that the ark was illumined in a supernatural way, (as the houses of the Israelites afterwards were ‡) in order to assure Noah and his family, that they were under the immediate guidance and protection of the ALMIGHTY.

* Section i. † See Sect. vii. ‡ See Exod. x. 23. Wisd. xviii. 1.

When we reflect on the violence of the rain, poured in torrents from the sky; the impetuosity of the subterraneous waters, and the length of time they prevailed; we cannot wonder that every living substance was destroyed.

Many proofs of a general deluge may be collected from history. The inhabitants of most parts of the known world have some tradition concerning this memorable event; and it is very common to find, at the tops of exceeding high mountains, hundreds of miles from the sea, large beds of shells, bones and teeth of fishes; and in other places, fragments of trees, the remains of land and sea animals, &c. which could not have been mixed together by any other accident.

At first sight, it appears hard that the beasts and other creatures, who were incapable of sinning should perish with sinful man; but, if we consider that instant death was not so great an evil to the brute creation, as other evils, which would, in all probability, have fallen upon them, had they not been drowned, we shall view it in another light. The alteration which the earth was to undergo in consequence of the deluge, would have deprived them of sustenance, and numbers would have perished with hunger; in which case, their misery would have been much greater than what they suffered by the flood. In all general judgments, the innocent must unavoidably perish with the guilty; but in this case they are not to be regarded as the victims of God's vengeance, but as taken away by his mercy from the evil to come. It is very plain from this portion of Scripture, that the sins of men provoked God to bring this signal judgment upon the earth.

Though the fishes are not mentioned, we have reason to believe, that most of them also perished by the violent commotion of the waters; but that God by a miracle

racle preserved some of every species; which is, at least, as easy as to suppose a new creation of this part of the animal world.

If we contemplate the history of the deluge, merely as it relates to the inhabitants of the old world, it affords a striking example of God's vengeance against incorrigible sinners; but if we regard it, as the Scriptures teach us to do*, as a warning to ourselves, it will surely be a check upon immorality and impiety, for none among us can be certain that the end of the world is not at hand. The day of judgment will come as suddenly as the flood did: but supposing that many ages should revolve before this awful period takes place, yet in respect to every individual on earth, it is certainly near: a few short years will, in a natural way determine our fate to all eternity; and even these may be shortened by some sudden and unexpected visitation. Let us then shun the example of a corrupt generation, and imitate that of Noah who feared God, and sought the righteousness which is by faith; that we like him may be heirs of salvation.

SECTION IX.

NOAH, &c. BY GOD'S COMMAND, COME OUT OF THE
ARK.

From Genesis, Chap. viii.

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

The fountains also of the deep, and the windows of

* See Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

And the waters returned from off the earth continually, and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated.

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

And the waters decreased continually, until the tenth month : in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made ;

And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up upon the earth.

Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground.

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark : for the waters were on the face of the whole earth : then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her unto him into the ark.

And he stayed yet other seven days ; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in unto him in the evening.

And lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off : so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more.

And it came to pass in the sixth hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth, and Noah removed

moved the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold the face of the ground was dry.

And God spake unto Noah, saying,

Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.

And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Noah and his family must undoubtedly have had an entire dependance on the promises of God, or they could not have supported their long confinement. It is agreeable to what we read of God's general dealings with the patriarchs, to suppose, that they were encouraged to this confidence by a visible token of the DIVINE PRESENCE; at least they must have had an inward assurance that God remembered them.

A miraculous power must also have been exerted to prevent the ill consequences, which would have arisen from such a number of different animals being shut up together, in so small a space, without the benefit of fresh air, for such a length of time.

As God vouchsafed to inform mankind by what means He occasioned the deluge, He likewise condescended to acquaint them how it was assuaged.

The word here translated *wind* is, in the Hebrew language,

language, the same that is translated *spirit*, in the account of the creation; we may therefore understand, that the immediate power of God produced a motion in the air, which acted upon the waters as at the first division of them, and that out of regard to the welfare of Noah, and those who were with him, both the increase and return of the waters were gradual, which prevented the ark from being tossed about so as to endanger their safety. At length the ark rested, but Noah and his family seem to have had no impatience to be set at liberty; for we do not find, that they even took a survey of the earth, till a considerable time after the resting of the ark: when Noah opened the window and sent forth the raven.

It is strongly implied, that Noah regularly observed the Sabbath? for we find, that he repeatedly sent forth the dove on the seventh day, as if in expectation of some extraordinary blessing on that day. At length she returned, bearing in her mouth an *olive branch*, as a divine signal of peace and favour. On the succeeding Sabbath she returned not, but impelled by that instinctive power, which guides the feathered race, found an habitation for herself among the new sprung branches.

Noah acting, as we may suppose, by divine direction, removed the covering of the ark, and had the happiness once more to behold dry land. Still he did not attempt to leave the ark, but waited for God's command, which being given, he instantly obeyed, and left his confinement, followed by his family and every living creature he had taken in with him, excepting the dove, which, as the harbinger of peace, was made the first inhabitant of the renovated world.

What transports of delight must have filled the hearts of this small remnant of human-kind, when they
came

came out of the ark, and beheld again the beauties of nature ! and how greatly must the different animals have enjoyed their restoration to the fields and pastures, and other accommodations suited to their respective natures !

It is not unusual with scoffers to make the history of the deluge a subject for ridicule. In order to guard our minds from their objections, we should remember that it is a very great absurdity to attempt to explain *miraculous events* by *natural causes* ; because on such occasions the usual operations of nature are suspended or diverted from their course. The belief of the omnipotence of GOD reconciles all difficulties ; and on proper reflection it will appear as credible, that GOD should destroy and renew the world, as that he should at first create it. Let us, then, turn a deaf ear to those idle speculatists, who call in question what is recorded in the Book of Truth, and corroborated by the concurrent testimony of the most antient traditions. And let us learn, from the relation of GOD's goodness in preserving man and other living creatures, to rely on his mercy in the midst of the greatest dangers that befall us.

SECTION X.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

From Genesis, Chap. viii. and ix.

AND Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings upon the altar.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour, and said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake ; neither will I smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

And the fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

And I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.

And with every living creature that is with you of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

And

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.

And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan.

These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may judge that it was an essential part of religion to offer sacrifices to the LORD GOD, by Noah's having recourse to them immediately after he left the Ark; and we may conclude, from the expression *The LORD smelled a sweet savour*, which is a figurative mode of speaking, that they were acceptable.

When Adam was first created and placed in Eden, he had several blessings and privileges conferred on him of GOD; these were forfeited at the Fall; but we here find these very blessings restored to human-kind in Noah and his posterity, *Be fruitful and multiply, &c.* *.

* Compare Gen. i. 28. with the passage under consideration.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact state of the earth from the Fall to the Flood ; but we have great reason to suppose, that it required much harder labour to cultivate it, than at present, especially before man was assisted by beasts. Labour in fact is no longer a curse upon mankind in general ; many men are totally exempted from it ; and those who toil the hardest are not subjected to it through the natural condition of the ground, but from other accidental circumstances, and are usually eased from the worst parts of it by instruments of husbandry, and the aid of horses, oxen, &c.—Thorns and thistles indeed it still produces, but not in such abundance as to be a plague : on the contrary, they may now be ranked among the blessings of the earth, since they add to the beauties of nature, and afford delicious food for birds and beasts ; nay, are often the means of restoring health to mankind when employed in medicines, or converted into milk, of the ass in particular. The case was very different in respect to Adam, supposing him to have been placed in a part of the earth over-run with these plants. It must have been a very laborious task to clear the ground from them with his own hands only, or the feeble assistance of Eve.

What the curse actually was, we may with great probability collect from that denounced against Israel when disobedient, *I will break the pride of your power ; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass : and your strength shall be spent in vain : for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits* *. God's promise of regular seasons after the flood seems to intimate that they were very irregular and confused before †. We may therefore reasonably conclude, that the state of the earth is

* Lev. xxvi. 19, 20.

† See this subject fully handled in Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

etter since the deluge than it was before ; of this, at least, we may be certain, that God has been faithful to his promise, which he made to Noah, for though floods and famines have been occasionally sent as judgments on wicked nations, they have never been general, so as to cut off every living thing from the face of the earth.

In addition to the privileges bestowed upon Adam, mankind had now that of eating flesh, with this restriction, that they should take care that every creature was totally dead, before they began dressing it for food.

It is remarked that those beasts, which feed on living creatures, are particularly fierce ; and it is likely, that the same practice would render man ferocious. There was a time when the lion, the wolf, and the tyger, *eat grass with the ox* *. How sanguinary are they now ! We may therefore consider it as an instance of Divine mercy to us, that man was forbidden to feast himself with the blood of those animals he was permitted to kill.

A positive command was at this time given against murder, and a law established for the punishment of that dreadful crime. This law is agreeable to right reason, and is still in force in all civilized nations.

Though God permitted mankind to kill animals for food, he did not give them a license to be cruel, or leave them at liberty to extirpate any entire species ; on the contrary, the ALMIGHTY took in every class of living creatures when He made the covenant, which is recorded in this section †, in order to convince Noah, and all generations, that the mercy of the Lord is over

* And God said to every beast of the earth, I have given every green herb for meat. See Section i.

† See Dr. Primatt's Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy, and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals.

all his works, and that every living creature, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth, is as much in its kind the object of his care as man.

It has been a question whether the rainbow was seen before the flood? Most likely it was, but no object in nature could be so proper for a *Token of the Covenant*, which GOD made at this time, because it is the effect of rain, and its appearance is a certain sign that rain does not fall at that time in every part of the world; therefore we cannot wonder that Divine wisdom should select it for this purpose.

From this section, we learn, that it is an acceptable act, in the sight of GOD, to return public thanksgivings for extraordinary deliverances.

We also learn to adore the SUPREME BEING for his mercy and goodness in pronouncing a blessing on the earth, whereby we ourselves enjoy such invaluable benefits, and which are entailed on our latest posterity.

We are likewise admonished to be thankful to GOD for restraining mankind, by a Divine law, from killing each other, and for giving us dominion over the brute creation, and implanting in their nature such a fear and dread of man, as render those beasts subservient to many useful purposes, who, from their make, are able to vanquish and destroy us. But we should never forget, that beasts are of consequence enough to be taken into covenant with GOD, and are therefore entitled to our regard; and so far from inflicting wanton cruelties on them, we should make it our study to render their lives as comfortable as possible,

Let us then imprint on our minds the EVERLASTING COVENANT, that whenever the TOKEN of it appears in the clouds, we may recollect it with gratitude, as it relates to mankind in general, and to ourselves in particular: never forgetting that *God's mercy is over all his works,*
and

and that it is our duty to be merciful to the utmost of our power, for man was made in *the image of God*.

By the conclusion of this section we learn, that every individual of the millions of human beings who now overspread the earth, originally descended from one or other of the sons of Noah.

SECTION XI.

NOAH'S DEATH.

From Genesis, Chap. ix.

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent:

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his uncovered father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered their father; and their faces were backward.

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

And he said, Blessed be the LORD GOD of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Noah was the first who planted a vineyard, and made wine, it is highly probable that he might be overcome by the liquor, before he knew, or was fully apprised of, its inebriating quality.

The

The behaviour of his youngest son was inexcusable; for it is a very great crime to expose and ridicule the errors of a parent. Filial duty requires children to do every thing in their power to conceal from the observation of others the infirmities of those, to whom they are so much indebted.

No wonder that Noah was offended; but we are not to regard the curse he denounced against Ham, or the blessings he pronounced on Shem and Japheth, as the result of his own wishes. His words are evidently *prophetic*, and related to the *posterities* of his sons, (and have been amply fulfilled, as is shewn in the course of this history) but it is likely, that Noah might be inspired to utter these predictions, at this time in particular, as a punishment from the LORD to one son for disobedience, and as a reward to the others for their filial piety. It certainly must have been a great mortification to Ham, to know that his descendants would be slave; it was an immediate degradation of himself, because it lessened his consequence in the world. Japheth, on the other hand, was proportionably exalted; and doubtless had great pleasure in hearing that his offspring would be so prosperous; What must have been the happiness of Shem, when he found that the LORD was, in a peculiar manner, to be *his* GOD! The event has shewn, that this part of Noah's prediction referred to the *promised seed of the woman*; and it is supposed that, as Noah was *heir to the righteousness which is by faith*, he was honoured with the privilege of *transmitting* the inheritance of the spiritual, as well as the temporal blessings, which were promised to the human race, all of whom were to proceed from his sons.

Noah had lived to see the temporal curse removed from the earth; and in the divine revelation made to him

him in this prediction, he had hopes given him that there would be a final deliverance from it*.

Noah seems to have been blessed with long life, as a reward for his fidelity to GOD. We do not read of any man after him that lived to so great an age. The flood happened 1656 years after the creation of the world, and 2349 years before the birth of CHRIST. The space of time from the creation to the flood is called the first age of the world. From Noah's example, mankind are warned to avoid indulging themselves to excess in drinking strong liquors; for none can tell what sins or follies they may commit, when they deprive themselves of the use of their reason.

As we shall have frequent occasion to speak of prophecies, it is necessary, before we proceed any farther, to explain what prophecy is.

The great CREATOR knows all things, past, present, and to come; and is able to make known to his creatures whatsoever he pleases. That mankind might know every thing which was necessary to encourage them to do their duty, and trust in Him, GOD revealed to them, at different times, a number of events, which were to happen at distant periods.

There is in the Bible what may justly be stiled a *chain of prophecy* relating to the SAVIOUR of the world; the first of these was spoken by the LORD Himself, and has been already noticed, viz. That by which Adam and Eve were comforted after the fall†, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*. This served to convey to our first parents a general hope and expectation of pardon and restoration, and kept them from despair, by affording grounds for trust and confidence in GOD, without which religion cannot be supported in the world. In this prophecy, all the sons of Adam have an interest, and to this the administrations of Providence

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

† See Section iii.

have in all ages had a relation, and will have, till the end of all things brings with it the appointed time for its full accomplishment.

To this prophecy, God's promise to Noah of establishing His covenant with him evidently referred.*

But the LORD did not always declare his predictions Himself; He appointed an order of men to be His instruments, who successively delivered many prophecies. These persons were divinely inspired, and spake not the dictates of their own reason, but the very words which God's *Holy Spirit* suggested. Lamech, the father of Noah, is supposed to have been under this Divine influence, when he predicted that his son would be a comfort to the world in respect to the curse which was, at the fall of man, laid on the ground; he therefore was a prophet; and Noah was a prophet when he cursed Ham, and blessed Shem and Japheth. The import of his prophecy has been already pointed out. The use and intent of prophecy seems to have been, to keep up a constant expectation of the coming of a Redeemer, and to serve as an evidence of him, when he should come upon earth.

In the course of this history, it will appear that there were two kinds of prophecies, which may be distinguished into *local* and *general*; the former related to the temporal concerns of particular persons or nations; the latter respected the spiritual concerns of all mankind. The completion of the first was an earnest of the accomplishment of the other.

SECTION XII.

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

From Genesis, Chap. xi.

AND the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

the east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident from this section, that many of the inhabitants of the earth had thrown off their confidence in the LORD, and trusted in their own wisdom and skill, and there is great reason to believe that the descendants of Ham had departed from the true Religion, and worshipped the Sun, to whom as a *Deity*, or at least as the *Image of God*, the Tower of Babel was to be dedicated and used as a temple or place of worship. Nimrod, who

who was the grandson of Ham, was at the head of this apostasy.

As mankind multiplied the same part of the world could not have contained them all, and we learn from some texts of scripture, that the LORD had portioned out the earth for the habitation of nations yet unborn. This, as we may judge by analogy, from what was done in respect to the Israelites afterwards, was probably made known to Noah, who as a prophet, was to inform his descendants who were to be the heads of those nations, where their respective portions lay, which we may conceive they were to take possession of at the time appointed by the LORD, the journeying therefore mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, was most likely undertaken by divine command; but some of the emigrants proposed to stop at the plain of Shinar, instead of going to their allotted country, and there fix their habitation. These, as we said before, were of the race of Ham, for we read that Nimrod set up a kingdom at Babel; and it was to frustrate the scheme which he and his followers had formed (to build a tower that should reach unto heaven) that the LORD descended to confound their language, and not that of the rebels and apostates only, but of all the rest of mankind, in such a manner that the different nations should have different languages; but it is supposed that in all them there was great affinity to the original language, which is generally imagined to have been Hebrew.

It seems, that the LORD visibly appeared on this occasion, and vindicated His own honour; but, according to His infinite goodness, He mingled mercy with judgment. For he spared the lives of those presumptuous sinners who had openly defied his power, instead of striking them dead as they deserved.

Nothing could more effectually oblige mankind to
separate

separate, than their not being able to understand others, or to make themselves understood. It was natural that those, who could converse with each other, should wish to live together, and accordingly depart together to the places of their respective allotments: thus were different nations founded, and in process of time the whole earth was overspread with the descendants of the three sons of Noah. The Patriarch with the race of Shem, are supposed to have continued in the East, and to have retained their original language, and also to have kept up the true religion; but the other nations became more or less corrupted.

The dispersion at the tower of Babel is supposed to have happened in the fourth generation from Shem; for it is said in Scripture, that *in the days of Peleg* (who in the genealogy holds that place) *the earth was divided*.

Nothing could more effectually awaken mankind to a sense of God's power and their own weakness, than the astonishing miracles here recorded. It was likewise calculated to teach those who should come after them, that schemes of ambition and presumption may be frustrated in a moment of time. Let us, then, carefully guard our minds against pride and impiety, and walk humbly with our God.

SECTION XIII.

THE GENEALOGY OF SHEM.

From Genesis, Chap. xi.

SHEM was an hundred years old, when he had ARPHAXAD two years after the flood, and he lived afterwards, five hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

ARPHAXAD lived thirty and five years and had SALAH, after which he lived seven hundred and three years, and had sons and daughters.

SALAH lived thirty years, and had EBER; after which
he

he lived four hundred and three years, and had sons and daughters.

EBER lived thirty and four yerrs, and had PELEG, after which he lived four hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters.

PELEG lived thirty years, and had REU, after which he lived two hundred and nine years, and had sons and daughters.

REU lived thirty and two years, and had SERUG, after which he lived two hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters.

SERUG lived thirty years, and had NAHOR, after which he lived two hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

NAHOR lived twenty and nine years, and had TERAH, after which he lived an hundred and nineteen years, and had sons and daughters.

TERAH lived seventy years, and had three sons, ABRAM, NAHOR, and HARAN.

Haran died before his father in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees ; and left a son named LOT.

And Abram and Nahor took them wives : the name of Abram's wife was SARAI. She had no children.

The name of Nahor's wife was MILCAH ; she was the daughter of Haran. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, Abram's wife, and they went forth with him from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan : and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

And the days of Haran were two hundred and five years : and he died in Haran.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This genealogy is preserved in order to shew that Abram descended in a direct line from Shem, the son of Adam and Eve, and to prove afterwards that the Messiah descended from Shem.

SECTION XIV.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM. GOD'S PROMISE.

From Genesis, Chap. xii.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreb. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

And Abram journeyed, going on still towards the south.

And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is likely that, after the dispersion of mankind at the Tower of Babel, the LORD, as a punishment for their not humbling themselves, withdrew His *visible presence*; for we do not read of his appearing on earth again, till some generations afterwards; however, the knowledge of the true religion could not have been lost to the world, if people had been intent on serving Him in an acceptable manner; but it is conjectured, that the greatest part of the nations, into which the world was divided, instead of keeping to the religion of Noah, gradually fell into idolatry, some entirely neglecting the worship of the true GOD, and fancying a plurality of Gods; others corrupting the worship of Him, by practices of their own invention, such as still subsist in the eastern countries.

GOD was pleased to suffer these abominations to prevail for a time, perhaps to give occasion for shewing the necessity of Divine revelation, and for displaying His wisdom and goodness, of which we should not have had such striking instances, if His power had immediately destroyed false worshippers: GOD, however, resolved to manifest Himself to the world, that all men might know, when they saw His mighty acts, that He is the only GOD; for this purpose, He determined to raise up a peculiar people, amongst whom he would maintain His honour, and keep up the expectation of the promised SAVIOUR.

Leaving, then, the idolatrous nations to follow their wicked abominations for a season, the LORD GOD appeared to Abram, and promised that, if he would obey His voice, He would make of him a great nation, and that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; which last words we understand to mean, that from Abram, should descend, at the appointed time, the SAVIOUR of the world.

Thi

This promise, which we may consider as the beginning of a new period of prophecy, was *two-fold*, relating first to a *temporal blessing*, to be bestowed on Abram's descendants; and secondly, to a *general blessing*, to be conveyed through them to all the other nations of the earth.

Abram, without the least hesitation, immediately left his native home, journeying from place to place; and built an altar to the LORD, wherever he took up his abode, that he might fully express his faith, by offering the sacrifices ordained by the LORD; and from this time he devoted himself entirely to the LORD GOD.

GOD's calling Abram, in the manner here related, is to be considered as an instance of His *free grace or favour* to mankind. We do not read that Abram had any claim to this distinction; but GOD knew that he would be faithful, and set a worthy example to the world: and the Scriptures teach us to regard Abram as a pattern of faith and obedience. In the first instance, he is exhibited to us as ready to follow the light of *Divine revelation*. No sooner did the LORD GOD appear to him, and require him to leave his native country, than he obeyed, and went out, not knowing the place of his destination*.—His ultimate hopes were fixed on a city, an eternal one, whose builder and maker is GOD†; and therefore he was not anxious about the concerns of this fluctuating world.

It is supposed that Terah left Ur, because the people of Chaldea were such idolators, as entirely to neglect the worship of the true GOD, who was still adored by most nations of the earth, though instead of honouring the LORD, they made to themselves *images or representations* of the Deity, according to their own imagination.

As Abram was no more than seventy-five years old,

* See Heb. xi 8, 9.

† Ibid 10.

when he left Haran, Sarai, who was the daughter of his youngest brother, must have been a young woman.

At the latter part of the chapter from whence this section is taken, it is related, that Abram, being fearful that some of the Egyptians would be enamoured with his wife's beauty and kill him in order to obtain her, desired Sarai to say she was his sister. Sarai obeyed him ; in consequence of this, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, took her to his house, intending to make her his wife, and the LORD sent plagues upon him and his family ; but as soon as Abimelech knew that Sarai was Abram's wife, he returned her to her husband, and dismissed them from Egypt.

By what means the LORD directed Abram to Canaan is not related ; but we may conjecture, with great probability, that the patriarch was guided by some visible token of the Divine presence, as his descendants were afterwards.

We find that Abram, after the LORD had called him, followed the religion of Noah ; built altars to the LORD, acknowledged Him to be GOD, and offered sacrifices to Him alone. The calling of Abram may be considered as a kindness to the posterity of Shem, to whom the LORD had promised, by Noah, to be a GOD, in a peculiar manner*.

Christians are taught, by the example of Abram, to direct their hopes to the same heavenly country as he did ; but without the aid of Divine revelation they cannot find the way to it. Happily for us, the *same* LORD, who was a guide to Abram, is ready to be our guide also. The LORD must not indeed be expected to appear to us as he did to Abram, nor is there occasion for Him to do so, because those purposes of Divine providence, for which the LORD so particularly direct-

* See Section xi.

ed this good patriarch, have been completed; and the way to the heavenly country is exactly described in His *written word*; let us therefore study it with the utmost attention, and pay a ready obedience to those Divine commands which it contains, not suffering our worldly interest to attach us too strongly to the concerns of this transitory life.

SECTION XV.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM CONTINUED, GOD'S PROMISES
AGAIN RENEWED.

From Genesis, Chap. xiii.

AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

And he went on his journeys from the south, even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai, unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take to the left hand,

then I will go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east : and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom.

But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

And the LORD said unto Abram after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth ; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered :

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it : for I will give it unto thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The inhabitants of Canaan were not immediately driven away to make room for Abram ; but from this time he had a right to consider the land as the inheritance of his posterity : however, he was contented with such a portion of it, as was sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his dependants ; but it was, without doubt,
very

very comfortable to him to receive from the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the world, a grant of country sufficient for the sustenance of the numerous posterity which was promised to him.

From this part of Abram's history, we should learn to pay regard to religion, wherever we go: to be kind and obliging to relations, and to place a firm trust and confidence in the promises of GOD. The friendly and courteous behaviour of Abram to Lot, is highly worthy of imitation, as it was calculated to promote peace and harmony, which are too often destroyed by the disputes of relations, and disagreements among their servants.

SECTION XVI.

ABRAM'S COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH.

From Genesis, Chap. xx.

AND Abram journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abram said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken: for she is a man's wife. And Abimelech said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother? In the integrity of my heart, and innocency of my hands, have I done this.

And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me.

Now, therefore, restore the man his wife; for he is a

prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live, and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

Then Abimelech called Abram, and said unto him What hast thou done unto us? and in what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me, and on my kingdom, a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

And Abimelech said unto Abram, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abram said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

And yet indeed she is my sister: she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother: and she became my wife.

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.

And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and women servants, and gave them unto Abram, and restored him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reproved.

So Abram prayed unto the Lord for Abimelech and his wife, and his servants, and the Lord heard him.

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech, and
Phichol

Phichol the chief captain of his host, spake unto Abram, saying, **GOD** is with thee in all that thou doest.

Now, therefore, swear unto me here by **GOD**, that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

And Abram said, I will swear. And Abram reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing; neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it but to-day. And Abram took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech: and both of them made a covenant. And Abram set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves.

And Abimelech said unto Abram, What mean these seven ewe-lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, for these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well.

Wherefore he called that place Beer sheba: because there they sware both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beer sheba; and Abram planted a grove in Beer sheba, and called there on the name of the **LORD**, the everlasting God. And Abram sojourned in the Philistines land many days.

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the **LORD**.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The events which are here related, seem to belong to an early part of Abram's history; but it is impossible to ascertain

ascertain their exact period ; nor is it of material consequence to do so, (as our present business is not with the *chronology*, but the *practical instruction* of the old testament) or many reasons might be produced to shew, that in the Bible they are not related in their natural order. Perhaps the sacred historian might have some motive respecting the *Jews*, for this arrangement; but there can no ill consequences ensue to Christians from transpositions of this nature; and, therefore, we will consider these circumstances as happening while Abram and Sarai were young. The Philistines were a people originally descended from Misraim, the son of Ham.

It is evident that Abimelech was on the whole a pious man, for he feared the LORD, and abhorred the crime of adultery, so that he would not take away another man's wife; though, according to a wicked custom, which prevailed in the world at that time, he did not scruple to have a plurality of wives.

It also appears that the LORD did not limit *Divine revelation* to Abram only; for both Pharaoh and Abimelech were acquainted by means of it, that they were in danger of committing a trespass, that would, according to the dispensation they lived under, bring heavy judgments on their kingdoms.

We may further infer from this section, that the *grace of God* was not yet withdrawn from all the nations of the earth, for Abimelech was prevented by it from perpetrating a crime, which he would otherwise have committed. The *method of Divine grace* is likewise explained. GOD did not lay an absolute restraint on the *will* of Abimelech, but represented to him the sinfulness of the action, and the punishment that would follow the commission of it.

By *Abram's* being appointed to pray for Abimelech, we may understand, that the patriarch had been made acquainted

acquainted with the *pure worship of God*, and knew how to address Him without those superstitious rites, which it is more than probable the Philistines used at that time.

Abimelech's expostulation with Abram had great justice in it; and Abram's apology was by no means a good one; but as we do not find that he practised this kind of deception afterwards, we may conclude, he was convinced that he had acted upon false principles.

The rebuke which Abimelech gave to Sarai, intimates that she made a greater display of her beauty than was proper for a married woman. The sum he presented her with, to buy a veil, amounted to about 57l. of our money. The covenant which Abram entered into with this king, is farther proof that Abimelech was a pious man, which justifies Abram for making an alliance with him. His giving him a consideration for the well intimates, that God had not given the grant of the land of the Philistines to Abram as an inheritance.

The grove which Abram planted was to serve the purpose of a temple or place of public worship; here, in all probability the good patriarch assembled his family, to pay adoration to the LORD, the EVERLASTING GOD. Afterwards, when the Tabernacle was made, grove worship was forbidden, for it had been greatly abused by idolators. The efficacy of *Divine revelation* in Abimelech's case, should lead all, who are tempted to commit the crime of adultery, to the same source.

If the crimes of Kings are likely to bring punishments on their subjects, those who have a virtuous Sovereign, are bound in *policy*, as well as *duty*, to pray for the continuance of his life; and if adultery is among those vices which bring national judgments on a guilty land, every subject should avoid the practice of it: and those who

have actually committed it, must seek for pardon through a *mediator*, for they can obtain pardon and grace no other way.

Evasions approach so near to falsehood, that they must be displeasing to a God of perfect *truth*; and we may understand from the dangers and difficulties to which they exposed Abram and his wife, that the incidents relating to his behaviour in Egypt and Philistia, are recorded as *warnings*, not as *examples* to the world.

Before we proceed, it will be proper to observe, that sacred history sets before us the faults and failings, as well as the virtues of particular people. That part of each person's character in which they are chiefly worthy of imitation, is plainly pointed out, and their general behaviour described in such a manner, that we may easily form a judgment of the propriety and impropriety of their conduct. *Divine revelation* does not perform the office of *human reason*, but kindly assists it in matters beyond the reach of its powers; therefore, whenever the scriptures do not pass that censure upon the bad actions of those whose history it relates, which they appear to deserve, it is because the *Spirit of God* does nothing unnecessarily.

SECTION XVII.

ABRAM RESCUES LOT, AND PAYS TYTHES TO
MELCHISEDEK.

From Genesis, Chap. xiv.

AND there was war between Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and his confederates, and Bera king of Sodom, and his confederates.

And the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountains.

And

And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son (who dwelt in Sodom) and his goods, and departed.

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants by night, and smote them, and pursued them, unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, (after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him) at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

And Melchisedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take
any

any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich : save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Ashcol, and Mamre ; let them take their portion.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read in a former section, that the descendants of the sons of Noah overspread the whole earth. Many ages passed, before all parts of the world were inhabited ; but mankind must have increased very fast, or there could not have been such a number of kings, as we read of in Abram's time. These monarchs had no great extent of territory, each reigned over one city and its suburbs.

As it has been questioned, how those continents came to be peopled, which are widely separated from the parts first inhabited after the flood, it will be proper to mention, that, though all the great quarters of the world, are, for the most part, separated from each other by some vast extensive ocean, yet there is always some place where an isthmus, or small neck of land, is found to conjoin them, or some narrow sea is made to distinguish and divide them ; and there is great reason to suppose, though it has not yet been discovered, that there may possibly be a small neck of land, by means of which some of the descendants of Noah passed into America.

We find, by the account here given of Abram's rescuing Lot, that he was a man of consequence in the estimation of his contemporaries. It is supposed, that the king of Sodom, who came to meet Abram, was the son of him who fell at the slime pits. Abram's refusal of the booty shewed, that he did not engage in the war
from

from avaricious motives, but entirely from that principle of humanity and affection, which ought to influence every one towards the unfortunate, especially if they should chance to be relations.

It has been a matter of great dispute, who Melchisedek, king of Salem, was, to whom Abram paid tythes. The apostle, St. Paul, has written largely on the subject*, and made it (as I think) evidently appear, that he was no less than the LORD himself, who, while mankind continued innocent, might justly be regarded in his government of them, as *King of Righteousness*; and afterwards as *King of Peace and Reconciliation* for them as sinners. But in the full discussion of this point, it would be proper to employ the apostle's arguments, which will appear in a much clearer light with the rest of the doctrines of the New Testament; we will, therefore, pass it over at present.

The practical instruction to be collected from this section is, that it is our duty to go to the assistance of friends, whenever we can render them essential service; that in all deliverances from our enemies, we are to ascribe glory to GOD; and that, if we should discover who the King of Righteousness and Peace is, and should find that he is ready to meet all who, like Abram, believe and trust in the *most high GOD, possessor of heaven and earth*, we are under an indispensable obligation to pay homage to Him, as it is He alone who can convey a divine blessing to us.

SECTION XVIII.

THE TEMPORAL COVENANT.

From Genesis, Chap. xv.

AFTER these things, the WORD of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

* Heb. vii.

And Abram said, LORD GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and lo! one born in my house is mine heir!

And behold the WORD of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir. And HE brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And HE said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And Abram believed in the LORD, and he counted it to Him for righteousness.

And the LORD said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, LORD GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

And He said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another, but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

And the LORD said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out with great substance.

But

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoaking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

In that same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In this chapter, we read, that the WORD of the LORD came unto Abram. We are taught by the Scriptures of the New Testament, and, indeed, by a succeeding verse in this section, that the WORD of the LORD is another title appropriated by the LORD GOD. The purpose of this vision seems to have been to strengthen Abram's faith by additional promises. It had been revealed to Abram before, that his descendants should be very numerous and prosperous, but as he had no present prospect of an heir, his hope might have failed, had not God thus graciously condescended to encourage it.

It is said that *Abram believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness*; that is, Abram believed that the LORD was GOD, that He had power to do all things, and was ever faithful to His promises. On account of this faith, GOD, in his own great mercy, forgave

forgave him all the former offences he had committed against Him, when he did not worship him according to His Holy Will, and regarded him as a righteous or just person, fit to be taken into covenant with Him; and even condescended to confirm this covenant after the custom of men; for in antient times, it was usual in solemn contracts to divide animals in the manner here described, and for the parties to pass between them*. In the performance of this ceremony, Abram's faith was farther exercised, for he seems to have watched a long time waiting for the LORD's coming to ratify the covenant.

The sleep which fell upon Abram was from the LORD. The horror which attended it was figurative of the misery of his descendants; and the prophecy concerning the Egyptian bondage, was designed, without doubt, as a future evidence of the foreknowledge of God; and that part of it which pronounced deliverance, was intended as a comfort and encouragement, to be kept in reserve for his posterity, when they should be under the calamities that are here predicted.

From the promise to Abram, that he should *go to his fathers in peace*, it has been inferred, that there is a place to which the souls of the deceased go, where they find those of their relations and friends.

From the expression, *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*, we may understand, that it is the course of Divine Providence to spare wicked nations, so as not entirely to extirpate them. We also learn, that when arrived at the height of presumptuous sin, they can no longer be suffered to remain, without bringing an imputation on the justice of God.

The smoaking furnace, and burning lamp, were

* See Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19.

tokens of the covenant which God at this time made with Abram concerning the *temporal* state of his descendants.

We read in a former section*, that the Lord promised Abram to give to him (as an inheritance for the numerous generations that were to proceed from him) all the land which he could at that time behold, and commanded him to take a particular survey of it; we find, section xvi, that he afterwards settled, and dwelt in the plain of Mamre. It is therefore most likely, as we have already supposed, that he removed from place to place, and in this peregrination, abode in Egypt and Philistia, by which means he had opportunity to examine the state and extent of the country.

In this section, we find the Lord fulfilling his promise, by giving this land to Abram's posterity.

The nations, whose right of inheritance is here transferred to the seed of Abram, were descendants of Canaan the son of Ham. They were at that time wicked idolators, and afterwards became most daring and presumptuous sinners.

We should learn from this section, to consider God as the Supreme Governor of the universe, portioning out the earth, and transferring the inheritance of its different territories from age to age, according to his good pleasure. This should teach the people of every nation to endeavour to obtain his favour, rather than confide in their own strength. God is a shield, defending from dangers *all* those who place their trust in Him; and a rewarder of *all* those who diligently serve Him; for He is no respecter of persons.

The nature and efficacy of Abram's faith is explained by the Apostolic writings; and from them, we also

* See Section xvi.

learn, thot by the *seed of Abraham*, we are to understand, not merely those who were his natural descendants, but also those who believe in the LORD like him. St. John the Baptist first taught this doctrine* ; and our Saviour afterward.

It is to be observed, that Abram was justified (or esteemed just) by *faith*, before any express law was given him. This circumstance (as we read in the Epistles) furnished the Apostles with many arguments in favour of the Gentiles, against the Jewish nation ; for it plainly shews, that the works of the Mosaic law were not necessary for justification to all sorts of people.

SECTION XIX.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM CONTINUED.

THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL.

From Genesis, Chap. xvi.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children : and she had an hand-maid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram, to be his wife. And her mistress was despised in her eyes.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee ; for I have given my maid into thy bosom, and now I am despised in her eyes : the LORD judge between me and thee.

But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand ; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

* Matt. iii. 9.

And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold thou shalt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Hagar appears to have been guilty of a fault in treating her mistress with disrespect; but Sarai should not have resented it with so much severity.

The promise here made to Hagar is a remarkable prophecy, which is at this very time fulfilling in the world, as will be explained in its proper place.

It is said that the *ANGEL of the LORD* found her, &c. From this expression, some interpreters have been led to suppose that it was a *created Angel*, but in this very section we are told the contrary. So far was Hagar from entertaining this idea, that she addressed the *LORD* who spoke unto her as *GOD*; we may therefore conclude, that the term *ANGEL of the LORD* is synonymous with the *IMAGE of GOD*, and applicable to the *DEITY* alone, the *Son of GOD*.

The chief practical lesson which presents itself in this section is, that it is the duty of servants to submit to their mistresses, even if the latter carry their displeasure to an unreasonable height; and that it is much wiser to do so, than to expose themselves to difficulties and distresses through pride and resentment.

SECTION XX.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT RENEWED WITH
ABRAM. CIRCUMCISION APPOINTED.

From Genesis, Chap. xvii.

AND when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the *LORD* appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the *ALMIGHTY GOD*; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abram fell on his face; and *GOD* talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I
will

will make nations of thee : and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an EVERLASTING COVENANT ; to be a GOD unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession ; and I will be their God.

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations.

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me, and you, and thy seed after thee : Every male child amongst you shall be circumcised. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised ; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people : he hath broken my covenant.

And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her : yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations ; kings of people shall be of her.

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old ? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear ?

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee !

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear a son indeed

deed ; and thou shalt call his name Isaac : and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee : Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly ; twelve princes shall proceed from him ; and I will make him a great nation.

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with money, every male among the men of Abraham's house ; and circumcised them, in the self-same day as God had said unto him.

And Abraham was ninety years old and nine when he was circumcised. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In a former section, we read of a *Temporal Covenant*, which the LORD GOD made with Abram ; we here find the LORD appearing unto this patriarch again, in order to make a *General and Everlasting Covenant* with him, or rather to confirm that at first made with Adam and Eve, and afterwards established with Noah, and from him transferred to Shem, from whom Abram descended,

Abram was himself well convinced, that the LORD was the ALMIGHTY GOD ; but the LORD foresaw, that persons in succeeding generations would form erroneous opinions concerning Him ; and for this reason (as we may

may presume) expressly declared, that he who was going to enter into covenant with Abram was *very* God, and not a *creature*.

It was required of Abram, that he should be *perfect*, or entirely devoted to the ALMIGHTY GOD, forsaking all manner of false worship.

We have reason to suppose, that, at this time, the DIVINE IMAGE was manifested with resplendent glory, for Abram fell on his face in humble adoration.

It is observable, that after having repeated the promises of the former covenant, and changed Abram's name to Abraham, which was more grand and honourable*, the LORD graciously proceeded to establish the covenant, and extend it to spiritual blessings, for so we may understand the expression, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*. It was yet a long time before Abram's race could be multiplied to so great a degree as is here promised; and many generations would successively pass away, before the heathen nations were to be driven out; we may therefore conclude, that Abraham looked (as the Apostle to the Hebrews expresses it) *for a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God called himself their God, having prepared for them a city in his eternal kingdom*†.

This is the first passage of Scripture, in which the LORD is styled the God of Abraham; it will therefore be proper to consider what construction may be put on this expression. The text just quoted, implies that it meant something more than the favour of God in this life, to the patriarch and his seed; and our SAVIOUR, in his discourse with the Sadducees‡, intimates very

* Abram signifies High Father;—Abraham, Father of a great Multitude.

† Heb. xi. 16.

‡ Luke xx. 37, 38.



strongly, that it has a reference to a future state. Whether Abraham had any expectation of a resurrection from the dead, is not expressly told us ; but it is certain, that he believed the power of God to be equal to the bringing about such an event.

Having promised such great and extensive privileges to Abraham and his posterity, God next proceeded to appoint a rite, by which they should be distinguished as his peculiar people. This rite was to serve as a *token* of their faith and obedience : it consisted in making a mark in their flesh.

That Sarai might have an equal dignity with her husband, her name was also changed*.

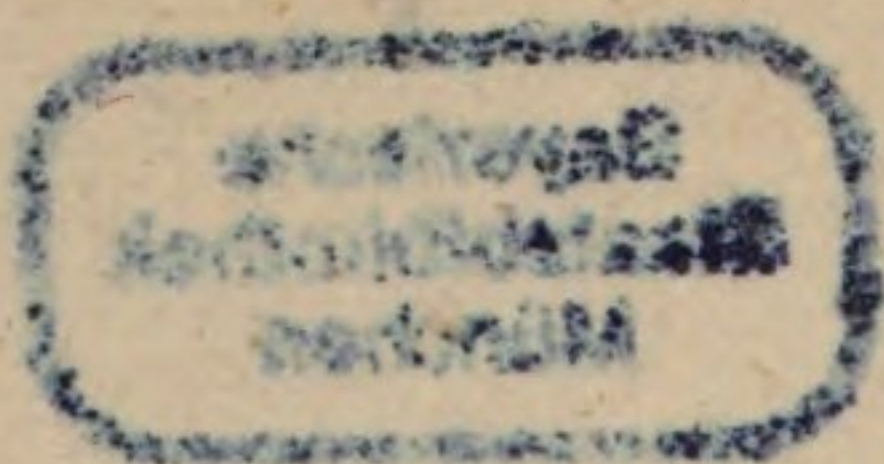
The good old Patriarch, pleased with the thoughts that Sarah would partake the honour intended for him, could not restrain his joy ; but, recollecting that he had already a son, parental affection pleaded in his heart in favour of him, and burst from his lips in the fervent wish—
O that Ishmael might live before Thee !

To reconcile Abraham's mind to the disappointment of Ishmael's being supplanted, God graciously promised that he also should be very prosperous, and possess both riches and honour ; one distinction was however reserved for him, who was yet unborn, namely, the blessing which related to *the promised seed of the woman*.

It will be proper to remark here, that the particular person among Abraham's numerous posterity, to whom the distinguishing inheritance was to descend, was fixed by the sovereign will of God, and not left to Abraham's

* Sarai signifies a Princess ; Sarah, a Princess or Mother of many nations. In those early ages, the heads of families had the supreme command over their descendants and domestics ; and they were properly called Princes and Princesses.

pleasure.



pleasure *: The LORD reserved to Himself the privilege of determining what *nation* should be His *peculiar people*.

From this section we are instructed to acknowledge the LORD to be the ALMIGHTY GOD; therefore, let us on no account degrade Him in our minds, but humble ourselves before him, with thanksgivings for His merciful condescension in making a covenant with Abraham, in which, as we may understand from the New Testament, all shall have an interest, who, like Abraham, *believe in the LORD, call on His Holy name*, and obey those commands, which he has made known by divine revelation.

The rite of *circumcision* is now abolished; but we have *baptism* in its stead, which is the token and pledge of a covenant conveying better promises. If it was necessary for Abraham and his family, and their descendants, to comply with the first, it must be our indispensable duty to comply with the latter. And as infants were to be initiated into the one, it is a natural inference that they should be partakers of the other. Can children too early in life be numbered amongst GOD's peculiar people, possessing the pledges of His divine promises?

SECTION XXI.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM CONTINUED.

From Genesis, Chap. xviii.

AND the LORD appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day.

And he lift up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to

* Rom. ix. 7, 8.

meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree :

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts ; after that ye shall pass on : for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man ; and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them ; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife ? And he said, Behold in the tent.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life : and Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind them.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in years : therefore Sarah laughed within herself.

And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old ?

Is any thing too hard for the LORD ? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not ; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

On this occasion, the appearance of the LORD GOD was different from that *manifestation of the divine Presence*, which Abraham had been accustomed to behold. And the LORD was attended by two Angels ; but both the divine and angelic natures were veiled under the human form, so that Abraham had first supposed he saw three travellers.

The purpose of this visit, in respect to Abraham, was that the LORD might name the exact time when Isaac should be born ; and it is remarkable, that the LORD made this promise, in the presence of two of his holy angels, calling them as witnesses to add to the solemnity of His engagement.

Sarah, who had never known of any people having children when so far advanced in life as she and her husband were, and not knowing (as we may suppose) that it was the LORD Himself that promised to send them a son, could not at first believe such an event to be possible ; but it pleased the LORD to strengthen her faith, by an assurance, that nothing was too hard for Him to bring to pass ; and her heart paid a ready assent to this important truth. Terrified lest the LORD (as He now appeared to be) should take offence at her presumption, Sarah committed another fault, by uttering a falsehood. The LORD knew that this was no more than the effect of human weakness, suddenly feeling the consciousness of sin, and having no time for recollection : He therefore took pity on her infirmity ; and, instead of punishing her, gently informed her, that the most secret actions were known to His omniscience, leaving her own heart to reproach her for the sins she had committed.

From this passage of sacred history we are instructed that hospitality to strangers is very pleasing in the sight of God. It is needless to expatiate on the benevolence which displayed itself in Abraham's solicitude, to afford his guests all possible refreshment. In that early age of the world there were no inns; and, therefore, these supposed travellers, had they been men, would have suffered great inconveniencies, from walking in the heat of the day, if they could not have gained admittance into some family. The present state of the world does not require an exact imitation of Abraham's and Sarah's conduct on this occasion; but it shews their characters in a most amiable light; and should incline every one to indulge such sentiments as actuated them, which will produce a regard to the necessities of strangers, and an inclination to assist them with every reasonable accommodation. We cannot expect the LORD personally to visit us in the manner He did Abraham and Sarah; because (as has been before observed) we live under a different dispensation; but the LORD has assured us in the Holy Scriptures, that if we comfort and refresh the weary traveller, *for His sake*, He will esteem it an instance of kindness done to Himself, and recompence it accordingly*. A cup of cold water only, given to a stranger, may bring a blessing to ourselves; therefore when we behold a fellow creature exposed to the scorching heat, or the pinching cold, without the means of refreshment, let us call to mind the love that is due to our LORD, and extend it to those whom he condescends to appoint as his deputies and representatives to receive it.

The Apostle, Peter, admonishes wives to take example from Sarah, who, we are told, *honoured her*

*Matt. x. 42. Mark ix. 41.

*husband, calling him Lord**. This admonition makes part of the marriage ceremony among Christians! it therefore concerns all women who enter into the state of wedlock; for having solemnly promised to obey, like Sarah, they cannot, without breaking a covenant entered into in the presence of God, exalt themselves above their Lords, and refuse that subordination which God originally appointed, when the woman was made an help meet for man.

SECTION XXII.

ABRAHAM INTERCEDETH FOR SODOM:

From Genesis, Chap. xviii.

AND the men rose up from thence, and looked towards Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

* 1 Pet. iii. 6.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went towards Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous shall be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes,

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, O let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. And he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there.

And he said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, O let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure there shall be

be ten found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having condescended to accept of Abraham's hospitality *, the LORD from henceforth regarded him as His friend †. He knew him to be one who had a sincere love for Him, who was ready to obey His commands in all things, and who would educate his children, and instruct his dependants, in the same pious principles: therefore being about to bring such a destruction upon two neighbouring kingdoms, as might strike Abraham's mind with consternation and fear, for the safety of himself and family, and occasion him to flee from the neighbourhood, and perhaps stagger his faith so far as it related to the infinite mercy of God; the LORD resolved to make Abraham acquainted with the determination of divine justice in respect to Sodom.

The angelic beings, who accompanied the LORD, were dismissed for a purpose which will be related in the next section.

It may be observed, that the scourge of war had been sent upon Sodom and Gomorrah without producing any amendment. And it is also to be remarked, that the LORD does not appoint deputies under him, and trust to their representations in the moral government of the world, but examines himself into the

* See Section xxi.

† 2 Chron. xx. 7. Isaiah xli. 8. James ii. 23.

conduct of human beings, as may be known from this instance, as well as from the Fall, the Flood, and the confusion of languages.

As soon as Abraham understood that the LORD designed to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he availed himself of the divine favour that was shewed to him, and interceded for those devoted cities. From the gracious manner in which his intercession was received, it is evident that his benevolence was well pleasing to the LORD, and would have been effectual, had not the measure of their iniquity been full. To what a pitch of wickedness must the inhabitants have arrived, if they did not furnish even ten *righteous* persons: that is, ten who believed in the *true* GOD, obeyed his will to the best of their knowledge, and shewed justice and mercy to their fellow creatures!

It appeared to Abraham (who had, as we may suppose, no time to consider the subject) inconsistent with divine justice, that the righteous should suffer with the wicked; and supposing that there was no future state of retribution, it certainly would be so. In the present case, however, GOD was fully justified in destroying all the inhabitants of Sodom, even upon Abraham's principle; and, as we pursue the history, we shall find His dealings with other wicked nations equally reconcileable with *perfect mercy* as well as *perfect justice*; we may therefore be certain, that in every national visitation, the *Judge of all the earth* doeth right. If the righteous must, from the nature of the visitation, perish with the wicked, GOD can, and doubtless will, recompense them in a future state.

The intimation which GOD vouchsafed to give Abraham, of his intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, was calculated also to answer the general purpose of informing future generations of mankind through

through him, that such awful calamities, as the destruction of whole cities, are not to be ascribed to *mere chance* or *natural causes* (as infidels term it). The ways of the SUPREME BEING are *uniform*, founded upon motives of the exactest rectitude; therefore, what He expressly *professed* to do, when He *visibly manifested His DIVINE PRESENCE* on earth, we may reasonably suppose Him to do now, *secretly* and *invisibly*.

How pleasing is it to reflect, that the Lord should make his ways known, and honour mankind so much as to converse with Abraham as one friend does with another! How much more comfortable to be assured, that the same divine being regards all true Christians in the same endearing relation! Thus, saith the DIVINE FRIEND of Abraham to Christians, *Ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not Servants, but Friends. These things I command you, that ye love one another**.

As Abraham therefore embraced the advantage which the favour of GOD afforded him, to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah, let us in like manner pray for all nations, particularly for our own, beseeching GOD, of his infinite goodness, to avert His impending judgements, if it be consistent with His justice so to do. And since we are encouraged from His discourse with Abraham, and from other passages of Scripture, to think that GOD sometimes spares a city for the sake of the righteous that are in it; let us endeavour to increase the number of these, by a careful regard to our own *faith* and *practice*, and the diligent instruction of our children and families, that we may obtain the

* John xv. 14, 15, and 17.

friendship of the LORD GOD. And if, after all our supplications, we see his judgements in the world; nay, even if we suffer by them ourselves, let us acquiesce in Abraham's sentiment, that *the Judge of all the earth doeth right*, on which we may build a confident hope, that what is a punishment to the wicked, will ultimately prove a blessing to the righteous.

It is plain from the expression, *the LORD went his way after he had done talking with Abraham*, that this was no visionary scene, but a real transactions.

SECTION XXIII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

From Genesis, Chap. xix.

And there came two Angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them, rose up to meet them: and he bowed himself with his face towards the ground; and he said, behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, unto your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways.

And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house: and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

But before they lay down, the men of Sodom compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people

people from every quarter. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are those men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you brethren, do not so wickedly.

And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: Now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even upon Lot, and came near to break the door.

But the Angels put forth their hands, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

And the Angels said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Sons in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD: and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get ye out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked, unto his sons in law.

And when the morning arose, then the Angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And while he lingered, the Angels laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

And

And it came to pass, that when they had brought them forth abroad, that He said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto him, Oh! not so my LORD. Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life: and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me and I die.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh let me escape thither, is it not a little one? and my soul shall live.

And He said unto him, see I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do any thing till thou be come hither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven: and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

But Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham gat up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the LORD. And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, and lo the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot

Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

And the first born bare him a son, and called his name Moab; he was the father of the Moabites: and the younger she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi; the same was the father of the children of Ammon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From comparing this section with the foregoing one, we may know, that the Angels who came to Lot were the same who had accompanied the LORD to Abraham's tent.

Of the nature and office of Angels we can form no perfect conception, for they are invisible to us at present; our ideas of them must be collected from the Scriptures, which acquaint us, that, in comparison of the LORD GOD, they are imperfect beings*: that they are appointed as guardians to good men†; that they conduct departed souls to paradise‡; that they desire the welfare of mankind§; and will, at the last day, be employed in separating the wicked from the good. We are also taught, that Angels are not to be worshipped||.

Lot, as well as Abraham, supposed, from the form in which the Angels appeared, that they were men; and he was equally ready to shew courtesy to them, which they (purposely, as we may suppose) give him an opportunity of doing, that the goodness of God might be

* Job iv. 18. Matt. xxiv. 36. Heb. i. 4, 13.

† Ps. li. 11. Matt. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14. ‡ Luke xvi. 22.

§ Luke ii. 15. xv. 10. || Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 8, 9.

vindicated, in saving a man, who utterly disclaimed the crimes which brought Divine judgments on the natives of the place*.

So great was the licentiousness of the inhabitants of Sodom, and its environs, that the weary traveller could not be invited to take refreshment in a private house, without being subject to the insults of a rude rabble. All that Lot could do towards protecting the strangers that came in to lodge with him, was, to expose himself to the outrages of his wicked neighbours, which he did without hesitation. His heavenly guests, who were sent to save him, delivered him out of their hands, and punished his impious adversaries as their crimes deserved.

Sodom, and the cities and country connected with it, were notorious for many sins. The prophet Ezekiel informs us†, that their iniquity consisted in pride, luxury, idleness, and want of charity to the poor. That the inhabitants were haughty, and abominable for the most detestable vices, and there was no good practised by them.

It seems that Lot did not make such expedition to depart, as the exigency of the case required. Perhaps he was solicitous to preserve his goods; but his angelic friends hastened him and his family away, and conducted them safely out of the city: here the commission of the heavenly messengers ended; for we find it said in the next verse, that “when *they* had brought them forth abroad, HE said, escape for thy life,” &c.; and by Lot’s answer it is evident, that the LORD manifested HIMSELF to him, and received the prayer, which would have been very improperly addressed to the *Angels*.

We are not to suppose from the expression, “I cannot do any thing, &c.” that God’s power was limited. It

* 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

† Ezek. xvi. 49, &c.

refers to His merciful intention of saving Lot and his family, on which account alone He suspended the execution of the judgment He had resolved to bring upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is mentioned, that *the sun was risen upon the earth*. In all probability, this bright luminary shone with its usual lustre, and gilded the mountains and plains with its cheerful rays, while the luxurious and careless inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah either reposed on their soft beds, or pursued with ardour their worldly affairs, without paying their early adorations to the God who made them. In a moment, the firmament melted with fervent heat, and a shower of fire and brimstone poured down on their devoted heads, burning up and destroying whatever grew on the surface of the ground, and rendering the earth from that time forth, unfit for culture or habitation*! From this instance we learn, that the element of fire, as well as that of water, is entirely under the government of Divine Providence, and may be rendered either an inestimable blessing, or a most distressing evil.

The sin of Lot's wife is supposed to have been *infidelity*†. Probably she did not believe that what had been revealed to her would come to pass. The judgment inflicted upon her was a most exemplary one, and remained for many ages *a monument of an unbelieving soul*. Josephus, a learned Jewish historian, says, that the Pillar of Salt was to be seen in his days. Interpreters tell us, that it did not consist of common salt, but of a metallic substance, such as was hewn out of rocks, like marble, with which it was usual to build houses‡.

When Abraham, with anxious solicitude, repaired early in the morning to the place where he had the pre-

* Deut xxix. 23. Isa. xli. 19. Jer. l. 40. † Wisd. x. 7.

‡ See Essay for a new Translation of the Bible.

ceding day stood before the LORD, how greatly must he have been affected with the awful sight which he beheld! Yet he arraigned not the justice of the LORD. He now understood, that nations are but as drops in the bucket, when GOD cometh to take vengeance on the wicked*.

The circumstances of the calamity not reaching Abraham, and of Lot's deliverance, are particularly pointed out by the sacred historian, and strongly intimate, that the whole transaction was directed by an over-ruling Providence.

Much practical instruction may be collected from the section before us.

In the first place we learn from it, and the passages of Scripture referred to, to be thankful to GOD for making known to us the ministry of Angels; and we may look forward with an increase of pleasure to a state, where, instead of being received with jealousy and envy as innovating strangers, we shall find a set of benevolent friends, who have been accustomed to interest themselves in the welfare of mankind, and who will rejoice in our exaltation to as great a share of blessedness as they themselves enjoy.

We are also here taught another lesson of good nature and hospitality.

We have likewise an additional instance of the interposition of Divine Providence, which shews, that the LORD, though He employs Angels as His ministers, does not abandon the human race to the government of imperfect beings; but is himself the SUPREME DISPOSER of all events.

From the command given to Lot to escape, we are admonished, that it is better to leave our worldly possessions behind, than to stay and perish with the wicked.

* Isaiah xl. 15.

We also learn, that we ought not to lead careless lives, from a dependance that nature will pursue a regular course of causes and effects. What is *nature* but the work of GOD? He therefore can instantly change the courses of the different elements, and send them as punishments on a guilty land, whenever he sees fit.

Since the Holy Scriptures point out so particularly the crimes for which Sodom and Gomorrah were condemned to destruction, we should make it our study to avoid them.

Our LORD has admonished us to *Remember Lot's wife* * ; we should, therefore, of all things, avoid *infidelity* : for if we are in no danger of being turned into pillars of salt, as warnings to mankind, a more dreadful fate awaits us, that of being *salted with fire* †, or kept alive for endless ages in a state of torment. Let us then imitate the faith and obedience of Lot, whose history, we are told, is written for our admonition ‡ ; and, in so doing, let us repose our souls on the mercy and goodness of GOD, who will give His holy angels charge to keep us in all our ways.

SECTION XXIV.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM CONTINUED—THE BIRTH OF ISAAC.

From Genesis, Chap. xxi.

AND the LORD visited Sarah as he had said ; for Sarah bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time GOD had spoken to him.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And

* Luke xvii. 32.

† Mark ix. 49.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 6. Jude 7.

Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to rejoice, so that all that hear will rejoice with me.

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.

And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking.

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bond-woman, and her son: for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son.

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bond-woman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice: for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation because he is thy seed.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar (putting it on her shoulder) and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the thubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bow shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

And

And God heard the voice of the lad : and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand : for I will make him a great nation.

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink.

And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran : and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At length, after many years of expectation, Abraham and Sarah were blessed in the birth of that son, whom God designed to be heir of the promises, respecting both the land of Canaan, and the *Everlasting Covenant*; and we are informed, that this joyful event happened at the exact time which the LORD had foretold; and that Abraham, in obedience to the Divine command, named the child Isaac. The great age of the Patriarch, and his wife, rendered his birth marvellous.

It appears that Sarah did not consign her son to the care of an hireling, but was nurse to him herself.

Sarah's severity in respect to Ishmael appears very illiberal; but we have reason to think Ishmael behaved in a most provoking manner, and that his mother encouraged him to do so; in all probability, envy and jealousy possessed their minds. Thus circumstanced, had the parties continued to live under the same roof, family harmony could not have subsisted; the LORD, therefore, in mercy to *them all*, permitted the dismissal of those who pretended to be rivals to Sarah and her son.

If Ishmael had continued to live in Canaan, he would, in all probability, after Abraham's death, have contested the inheritance with Isaac ; and, by this means, would have lost the chance of becoming a great nation in another country ; and we cannot suppose that God would have suffered him to obtain the inheritance which he designed for Isaac.

We may easily conceive, that Abraham's distress on this occasion was very great ; and, had not the LORD commanded him to yield to Sarah, there is reason to think he would have made an earnest opposition to her request, which would have given rise to domestic bickerings, subversive of peace and good order ; neither could he have had the satisfaction of seeing Ishmael in the way of becoming a mighty nation. The good patriarch, therefore, considering himself as called upon to give a fresh instance of his faith in the Divine promises ; without hesitation, dismissed a son tenderly beloved, and a woman who had an undoubted right to his kindness.

It is said, that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with no other provision than a *little bread* and a *bottle of water*. He knew that the *providence of God* was infinitely better than the most ample portion he could bestow, and did not presume to invade the province, which the LORD had graciously taken upon *Himself*.

It seems as if Hagar had forgotten the promise which had been made to her before the birth of her son, or that would have kept her mind from despondency.

Ishmael, though famishing with thirst, remembered the lessons of piety he had learned from his father, and called upon the LORD, who never faileth to help those that apply to Him in the time of their distress.

Hagar was gently admonished to have confidence in God ; and, as a reward for her maternal tenderness, was made instrumental to her son's recovery.

Who the ANGEL OF THE LORD was has been explained in a former section *.

We find that in a short time Ishmael (who, when he left his father's house, was 16 or 17 years old) made so good use of his bow and arrows, that, under the blessing of God, he gained a comfortable support for himself and mother. Game was at that time very plentiful; and it is likely, that being so expert an archer, Ishmael was able to shoot a sufficient quantity to exchange with his neighbours for other necessaries. It is supposed that he made himself lord of the place where he fixed his abode; and that he was in no kind of necessity, or he would not have married, because the maintaining his wife would only have increased his distress, if he met with difficulties in providing for himself alone.

From this section, we learn to confide in the promises of God. Many there are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, in which we *all* have an interest; and we may depend upon it, the expectations they are designed to raise will not be disappointed, if, like Abraham and Sarah, we fulfil the conditions required on our part, which are comprized in *faith* and *obedience*.

No part of Scripture is written in vain; we may therefore justly infer, from the mention of Sarah's being a nurse to Isaac, that this endearing office is a part of the maternal duty. The misfortune that befel Ishmael should be a lesson to *young people*, not to give way to impertinence, especially towards those on whom they depend for maintenance and support.

Abraham's acquiescence with the Divine will instructs parents to submit to the dispensations of Providence, in cases where there is a necessity for sending their children to seek their fortune in the world. It is

* See Section xix.

often astonishing to see the success of those who set out with very small portions ; but as miraculous interposition is not now to be expected, parents should do their utmost towards providing for all their offspring ; and then trust them to the protection of Heaven ; but above all, it should be their care to season the minds of their children with early piety, that in the day of distress, when they may chance to be exposed to perils, by land or by sea, and far distant from their native home, they may implore for themselves the aid of the LORD, and, like Ishmael, be heard.

Mothers are admonished, by this portion of Scripture, not to fall into despondency, as soon as they see a child in danger, as relief is often nearer at hand than they are apt to imagine ; and mankind in general may understand from it, that what appear to be ruinous misfortunes, may in the end prove the foundation of prosperity and happiness.

SECTION XXV.

ABRAHAM OFFERETH HIS SON ISAAC.

From Genesis, Chap. xxii.

AND it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham ; and he said, Behold here I am.

And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son ; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering

offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of: and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I.

And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and Abraham offered him up for a burnt offering, in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh : as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son :

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba ; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

And it came to pass, after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor ;

Huz his first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram,

And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

And Bethuel was the father of Rebekah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is said, that “ God did *tempt* Abraham,” by which we are to understand no more than that he *tried* him ; for it appears from the sequel, that the LORD had no design of leading Abraham into sin. GOD cannot be tempted to do evil, neither doth He at any time tempt men in this sense of the word*.

* Jam. i. 13, 14.

The mountain, on which Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac, was the same on which the Temple of Solomon was afterwards built.

A greater trial could not have been proposed for any human being, than to require an affectionate father to sacrifice, as beasts were sacrificed, a son, in whom the hopes of his family's becoming a great nation were centered ; yet we find Abraham, with the utmost composure, making every requisite preparation for this purpose.

The good patriarch had so long been accustomed to trust in God, that faith in the Divine promises was become a settled habit, a fixed principle in his nature. The repeated assurances, which the LORD had given him, that in *Isaac his seed should be called*, left him no room to fear that he should eventually be deprived of him. It is impossible to tell what passed in Abraham's mind while he pursued his journey ; but there is reason to think, from what he said to his young men, and from his answer to Isaac, that *Faith* produced *Hope*, and that he regarded God's command as a *trial*, not as a *temptation*.

When arrived at the place to which he was directed to go, Abraham saw no lamb provided, as he seems to have expected. The command of the LORD was express, *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering*. A painful conflict, no doubt, arose in Abraham's bosom. There were a thousand considerations to deter him from killing his son. How could he bear to part with his darling child ? What would Isaac's poor afflicted mother say ? In what light would the world regard this inhuman action ? And what would become of the hopes of a numerous seed, if the branch that was to produce them should be cut off by his own unnatural hand ? In opposition to

these weighty reasons, the promises of God presented themselves to Abraham's mind, with a thankful remembrance of the numberless blessings that had been conferred on him. Could he disobey such a gracious Being? Gratitude forbade this. Did he not know, that the power of God was infinite? Could he then dare to offend him? He had at first received Isaac as a gift from God, out of the common course of nature: Who could tell, but that the LORD might design to shew forth his power, by raising his son from the dead? At all events, it was his indispensable duty to *obey*; for, besides the natural claim which the CREATOR has to the obedience of his creatures, Abraham had entered into a solemn covenant to serve the LORD with a *perfect heart*; he therefore determined to fulfil the Divine will, trusting to the infinite mercy of God to save him from the miseries that threatened him. Animated by piety, and supported by the hope, that his son, who was now devoted to God, would be given to him again, *even from the dead**, Abraham forbore to expostulate, or to entreat the LORD to alter his Divine purposes, but took the knife in his hand, and lifted up his arm to give the fatal stroke. This God regarded as an evident proof that his faith was an *active principle*, not resting in the inward belief of his own mind, but ready to shew itself to the world in such *works* as were necessary to prove his fear of God, and reliance on those Divine promises, which had been vouchsafed to him. The purpose was now fully answered, for which the Divine command had been given; and the LORD shewed, that he was far from wishing for the death of Isaac, by desiring Abraham not to do any thing unto him.

* Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

What a transport of joy must this good man have felt, when he heard the Angel of the LORD calling to him, and saw a ram (agreeably to the *wishes*, and perhaps the *prayers* of his heart) ready to supply on the altar the place of his dear son! And how must his joy have been redoubled, when the *eternal* God, in an audible voice, speaking by His Angel or Image, confirmed in heaven, with an oath, the promises He had before made on earth, that they might endure when this perishing world should be no more! We cannot suppose, that the *Angel of the LORD*, who called to Abraham, was a *created being*; for why should God, who had repeatedly conversed with this Patriarch in His own *Divine Person*, on this occasion alone employ a *ministering spirit*? To prevent his thinking so, Abraham was assured, that HE, who now spake, was the same God who had commanded him to offer up his son; the same LORD he had been accustomed to hold converse with; still manifesting the DEITY to his outward senses, though with more solemnity than HE had ever done before.

The Apostle to the Hebrews confirms the opinion, that it was the SUPREME BEING who took this oath; for he says, *because GOD could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself. Willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, He confirmed it by an oath; that, by two immutable things, (viz. His PROMISE and his OATH) those who fled for refuge to the hope set before them, might have a strong consolation**.

It is to be observed, that God pledged himself by this oath to make good his promises, not only to Abraham and his immediate posterity, but *to all the nations of the earth*.

* Heb. vi. 13, 17, 18.

It has been a question in dispute, whether Isaac consented to the offering which his father made. Most likely he did ; for, according to his age, which is supposed to have been at least 24 or 25 years, he must have been more powerful and active than so old a man as Abraham, and could easily have wrested the sacrificial knife from his hand, or prevented his binding him by fleeing away ; and it appears, that there was as good an understanding between Isaac and his father afterwards, as before.

From the example of Abraham we learn, that *faith* is not complete without *works of obedience* ; and that it is our duty to submit, without murmuring, to all the dispensations of GOD. None of us will be called to so severe a trial as Abraham was : we shall not be required to offer up our sons as burnt-offerings ; but GOD may see fit to take our children to himself, and deprive us of them. In this case let us call to mind the *Divine promises*, which teach Christians to look forward with joyful expectation to a resurrection from the dead, when all who, like Abraham, have *believed* and *obeyed*, will, as *his seed*, be blessed with immortal life and everlasting happiness.

SECTION XXVI.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH.

From Genesis, Chap. xxiii.

AND Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old : these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba ; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan : and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you : give me a possession of a burying place

place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord; thou art a mighty prince amongst us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar: that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me, for a possession of a burying-place amongst you.

And Ephron dwelled among the children of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gates of this city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hun-

dred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gates of his city.

And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

And the field and the cave that is therein were made sure unto Abraham, for a possession of a burying place, by the sons of Heth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this section, that Abraham understood the promises which God had made to his family of the whole land of Canaan, as relating to a distant period of time; and therefore did not attempt to seize on any part that was in the possession of others, but was contented with the liberty he enjoyed of living quietly as a *stranger* and *sojourner*, changing his abode occasionally, as the exigencies of his affairs required. On the other hand, the people of the land regarded him as a person of distinction and consequence, particularly favoured by the God of heaven and earth*.

The gates of cities in those days, and for many ages after, were the places of judicature and public resort. Here the governors and elders of cities went to hear complaints, and administer justice, make conveyances, titles of estates, &c. So that Abraham could not have made his purchase, without going to the city gates.

* See Gen. xxi. 22.

The silver which Abraham paid for the purchase of the field and the cave, amounted to about sixty pounds of our money.

Sarah lived to a good old age, and had the happiness of seeing her son Isaac grow to man's estate; and it appears, that Abraham was sensibly affected with her loss, for it is said he came to mourn for her; and he was very solicitous to procure a sepulchre, that her remains might not be removed by the natives of the place.

The history of this transaction between Abraham and the people of Heth, affords a pleasing example of politeness and hospitality, generosity and justice.

SECTION XXVII.

THE MARRIAGE OF ISAAC WITH REBEKAH.

From Genesis, Chap. xxiv. and xxv.

AND Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

But thou shalt go into my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again.

The LORD GOD of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and

which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land ; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath, only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed (for all the goods of his master were in his hand :) and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

And he made his camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

And he said, O LORD GOD of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham :

And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink ; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also : let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac ; and thereby shall I know, that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that behold Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon ; and she went down to the well and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord : and she hasted and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said,
I will

I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

And the man wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, Whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold ; and said, Whose daughter art thou ? tell me, I pray thee : is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in ?

And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. And he said, Blessed be the LORD GOD of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth : I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house, these things. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban, and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

And it came to pass when he saw the ear-ring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me ; that he came unto the man, and behold he stood by the camels at the well.

And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD ; wherefore standest thou without ? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the man

came into the house : and Laban ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

And there was sat meat before him to eat : but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And Laban said, Speak on.

And the steward said, I am Abraham's servant.

And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great : and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses.

And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old : and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell ; but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. And he said unto me, The LORD before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee and prosper thy way ; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house :

Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred ; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go :

Behold I stand by the well of water ; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink :

And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw

draw for thy camels : let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder ; and she went down unto the well, and drew water : and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also : so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou ? And she said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him : and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD GOD of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me ; and if not, tell me ; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD : we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

And it came to pass, that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah : he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were

were with him, and tarried all night : and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten ; after that she shall go. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way ; send me away, that I may go to my master.

And they said, we will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man ? And she said, I will go.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man : and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi, for he dwelt in the south country. And he went out to meditate in the field at the even tide ; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold the camels were coming.

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel ; for she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us ? And the servant had said, It is my master : therefore she took a vail and covered herself.

And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife : and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Isaac

Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian, of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nahor very probably either removed with his father Terah (as Abraham did) from Ur, in Chaldea, and settled at Haran, in Mesopotamia, or not long after followed them thither. We find that the promises of God, as far as they related to Abraham's personal prosperity and happiness, were abundantly fulfilled; for he was blessed in *all things*, and had as full enjoyment of the land of Canaan, as his circumstances would admit of: the entire possession of the country would have been an incumbrance to him, and disadvantageous to his posterity, for he could not have peopled it all, and the parts unoccupied would have been over-run with wild beasts, and covered with briars and brambles, before his descendants could increase into a nation.

It was very natural that Abraham should wish to see Isaac settled before he died; and as the people who surrounded him were idolators, he certainly would have been very unhappy had Isaac made an intimate alliance with them, especially as it had been revealed to Abraham, that their presumptuous wickedness would provoke the LORD to cut them off at last.

It would have been an imprudent step, if Abraham had suffered his son to leave the land of Canaan, and go to the very place from whence he himself had been called by the LORD. Besides the good Patriarch knew that in Mesopotamia, even those who adhered to the true God, had greatly corrupted His holy worship, and that the generality of the people were very much addicted to idolatry; in this case, Isaac would have been exposed to the

the danger of being drawn away from his duty, had he gone thither in search of a wife. Besides, he might have fancied some other woman in the country, instead of one of his own kindred, and by this means have made an improper match.

Abraham considered that his own life was very uncertain; and knowing the fidelity and discretion of Eliezer, he appointed him the guardian of his son in this momentous affair.

The oath which Abraham required his steward to take, was the most solemn one then in use.

It does not appear that Eliezer was visibly conducted by an *angel*, but it is likely that Abraham, in sending him, acted agreeably to Divine direction, and that he had received assurances from the LORD GOD *of heaven and earth*, that an extraordinary providence should attend this expedition. The readiness of Eliezer to undertake it, shews, that he was a pious good man, worthy of this important trust; and his subsequent behaviour was such as might justly be expected from a person trained in Abraham's house. The prayer Eliezer offered, was exactly suited to the occasion, which was so difficult a one, that without some sign from the LORD, he would have been utterly at a loss how to proceed, for he was not acquainted with a single person in the country; and had he opened his business to strangers, he would have been in great danger of imposition.

In those days, they had not contrivances for conveying water from place to place by pipes as we now have; nor indeed would it have been worth their while to be at the trouble and expence of making them, because they frequently changed their situation; which obliged them to have public wells, and to water their flocks at stated times, when all the young women used to attend,
it

it being part of their business to look after the sheep. This was the occasion that brought Rebekah to the place where Eliezer had his first interview with her.

It is evident from his thanksgiving at the well, and the relation he gave of the sentiments which successively arose in his mind, that Eliezer perceived the providence of God disposing all events for the accomplishment of the business he was employed in. And we may also judge, from the ready concurrence of Rebekah and her friends, that they were of the same opinion.

There is one particular in Rebekah's conduct, which shews her character in a very pleasing light; that is her humanity to the camels*. When she went to the well and beheld the poor weary beasts, though she knew not to whom they belonged, she was moved with compassion towards them, and offered, without the least solicitation, to draw water for them *all*. This was a very laborious employment for a young woman to undertake, considering that camels are very large creatures, and that they drink water in great abundance to serve them for long travel in dry deserts, and Rebekah had no less than ten of them to satisfy; yet she performed her promise, and drew for them *all*. Her brother Laban likewise was so attentive to the necessities of the beasts, that before he gave the men any refreshment, he ungirded the camels, and gave them provender to eat, and straw to lie down and rest on. Compassion urged him to take the first care of those creatures that could not take care of themselves.

How admirable was the fidelity of Eliezer. He would neither eat nor drink, till he had executed his commission.

The readiness of Rebekah to leave her friends, and of

* Dr. Primatt's Dissertation.

then to part with her, shewed a firm trust in the LORD. The blessing pronounced on her at parting, seems to allude to the *Everlasting Covenant*. This afterwards became a solemn form of benediction in the marriage ceremony among the Jews.

The marriage of Isaac appears to have taken place soon after the death of his mother.

In former sections we read, that the LORD on many occasions visibly interposed in Abraham's temporal concerns. We find in this portion of Scripture a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, that could scarcely have happened by chance. Abraham's servant was not favoured with a *visible manifestation of the DEITY*, yet he clearly discerned a particular Providence in the occurrences which befel him, and acknowledged with thankfulness the goodness of the LORD.

By his example, we are instructed to ascribe our success and prosperity in the affairs of this life, to the merciful guidance and direction of an over-ruling Providence: for what the LORD did for Eliezer, He still continues to do for all who put their trust in Him. *A man's heart (says Solomon*) deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps.*

It is to be observed, that Eliezer did not throw himself entirely upon *Providence*: in the first place he solemnly resolved to do what his duty required; he then employed those means for the accomplishment of his purpose, which human reason would in that case naturally suggest (providing himself with such a retinue and presents, as were likely to procure him credit and attention); and having done this, he prayed to the LORD GOD to dispose those contingencies which were not in his own power. Let us in every important affair

* Prov. xvi. 9.

pursue the like method ; and if our wishes are crowned with success, let us not pride ourselves in the wisdom of our own contrivances, but, with humility and thankfulness, acknowledge the goodness of the SUPREME DIRECTOR *of all events*, as Eliezer did.

SECTION XXVIII.

THE BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB.

From Genesis, Chap. xxv.

And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she had no children, and the LORD granted his prayer.

And Rebekah went to enquire of the LORD, and the LORD revealed to her that two nations should proceed from her, and that they should be two manner of people ; that the one people or nation should be stronger than the other ; and that the elder should serve the younger.

And Rebekah bare twin sons, and she called the first-born Esau, and the younger she called Jacob. And Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

And the boys grew : and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field ; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison : but Rebekah loved Jacob.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Isaac was heir to the promises, it was very natural for him to be desirous of having a son, that he might transmit the inheritance to the next generation ; however, it seems that he waited with patient resignation for 20 years, and then his hope beginning to fail, he solemnly and earnestly entreated the LORD to grant him an increase of family.

By

By the expression *Rebekah enquired of the LORD*, we may understand that GOD still continued, by *immediate revelation*, to make his will known to his chosen servants.

The prediction given to Rebekah, on this occasion, was a very remarkable one, and, from its accomplishment, will be found to relate not *personally* to the children that were to be born of her, but *nationally* to their *posterities*; and the Apostle to the Hebrews refers to it as a proof, that the purpose and intention of GOD, according to his own free choice, was the only rule and standard for his choosing one nation rather than another, to be his peculiar people, not any works or merit on the part of man; for this declaration was made before the persons from whom these two nations were to proceed, were born; consequently, before they had done good to deserve, or evil to forfeit the Divine Favour*.

As the children grew up, their genius and disposition led them to different pursuits; but there was nothing in the manner of Jacob that indicated his future superiority to his brother: on the contrary, Esau was of an active enterprising spirit, Jacob of a quiet domestic turn.

SECTION XXIX.

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM.

From Genesis, Chap. xxv.

WHEN Sarah was dead Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah; and she bare him six sons, Zimram, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

* See Rom. ix. 10, 11, 12. See also Taylor's Paraphrase on this chapter of Romans.

And

And the sons of Jokshan, were Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian ; Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

And Abraham gave all that he had in the land of Canaan unto Isaac. But unto the other sons which Abraham had, he gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac, eastward, unto the east country, while he yet lived.

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life, which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years ; and was gathered to his people.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre ;

The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth : there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Who Keturah was, whom Abraham married, is not known ; but, without doubt, if she had ever been an idolatress, she was not so when he took her as his wife.

It had been predicted by the LORD, that Abraham should be the father of many nations, and he lived to see the sons and grandsons, from whom they were to proceed, grow up ; and so considerable were his possessions, that he was enabled to give them all portions, without any injury to his son Isaac. They settled comfortably in different places, and multiplied and prospered exceed-

exceedingly. In time, each family became a nation, and their descendants branched out into other nations : so that all the generations could not be numbered individually by human art, any more than the dust of the earth, the sand on the sea-shore, or the stars in the firmament*.

Ishmael, in particular, was successful to a remarkable degree ; and had, as the LORD promised, twelve sons, who became princes, and confederated together, so as to form a great nation†.

This wonderful prosperity was doubtless considered by Abraham as the completion of that part of the *Temporal Covenant*, which related to himself, and was an earnest of the completion of the *Everlasting Covenant*. In this sense we should regard this passage of Sacred History, and learn from it to place a strong confidence in the promises of GOD‡, respecting this covenant, made known to us in his Holy Word, but which still remain to be fulfilled.

The other branches of Shem's family increased also, as did the posterity of Japheth and Ham. Those descended from Canaan, as we observed before, were the idolatrous nations, whose land was given as an inheritance to the descendants of Abraham.

In providing for his other sons, Abraham had carefully reserved for Isaac all his property that was annexed to the covenant, which God had vouchsafed to make with him respecting the land of Canaan, a large tract of which must, by this time, have been overspread by his numerous flocks and herds. The good Patriarch took a very proper measure in sending his other sons to settle in distant places ; for it was the only probable

* Gen. xiii. 16. xv. 5. xxii. 17.

† See Gen. xxv.

‡ Gen. xviii. 19.

way of preventing animosities and jealousies amongst them.

We find, by the account that is here given us of the years of Abraham's life, that the Divine promise* respecting this particular, was faithfully fulfilled, for he lived to a *good old age*, considering that the period of man's life was greatly contracted after the flood. It is said, that *he was gathered to his people*. This expression is synonymous with that in the prophecy, *Thou shalt go to thy fathers*, and cannot allude to the interment of his *body*, because his fathers were buried in a distant part of the world.

Having brought the history of Abraham to a period, and seen that he was faithful to the LORD, and that the LORD was true to all his promises respecting him, let us emulate the example of the good Patriarch, that we may be reckoned among his children.

The history of Abraham abounds with wonderful events, and exhibits the character of this good man in different points of view. We sometimes find him guilty of faults, which shew that he was subject to the infirmities of human nature; but it is proved by a variety of instances, that his faith in God's promises, and obedience to the Divine commands, were such, as justly entitle him to be called the *Father of the Faithful*; and it is this part of his character that is proposed to our imitation. Let us then imitate the good Patriarch, that we may at length obtain (through the infinite mercy of God) a share of the blessings provided as the reward of faith and obedience by Him who changeth not†; neither will he break his covenant, or alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth. The LORD hath

* Gen. xv. 15.

† Mal. iii. 6. Jam. i. 17.

sworn,

sworn, and it shall come to pass ; He hath purposed, and it shall stand, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

SECTION XXX.

THE DEATH OF ISHMAEL.

From Genesis, Chap. xxv.

AND it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that GOD blessed his son Isaac ; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.

And Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare, had twelve sons, and these are their names : Nebajoth, Kedar, Abdeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles ; twelve princes according to their nations.

And Ishmael and his sons dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, in the way to Assyria.

And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years ; and he gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people ; and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this account of the family of Ishmael, that the Divine Promise made to Abraham concerning him, was literally fulfilled, for he had twelve sons who were princes, and a great nation proceeded from him, which has existed in an independent state down to the present time, called now *Arabs*.

It appears, that Isaac and Ishmael lived in harmony together.

together, as they united in the pious office of giving honourable burial to their father. Neither had Ishmael any cause to envy the *temporal prosperity* of his brother, for having the advantage of being born so many years before him, his family had multiplied greatly, and was become of consequence in the world, before Isaac had any children grown up.

It is related of Ishmael, that *he died in the presence of all his brethren*. Before his birth, it was predicted of him, that *he should be a wild man; that his hand would be against every one, and every one's hand against him; and that he should dwell in the presence of all his brethren*. We do not read of any particular contests, which Ishmael had with the other descendants of Abraham; but it may be inferred from these passages, that having permission from GOD to dwell in a certain part of the world, he and his posterity resolutely maintained possession of it, and were blessed with success, in spite of the invasions and opposition which the natives of the adjacent countries might think fit to make, to prevent their establishment. Of the present race of Arabs, who are supposed to be the original descendants of Ishmael, it may literally be said *that their hands have ever been against every one's, and every one's hand against them; and yet they have continued to live in the presence of all their brethren*, for they were never wholly subdued, even by the greatest conquerors of the earth: but it appears like injustice to Ishmael and his sons, to suppose, that *they* were robbers by profession, because the present wild Arabs are so: it is much more reasonable and candid to imagine, that the pretence of seizing the property of others, as a lawful right derived from their progenitor, is a corruption of later times. The LORD would not have placed any set of people in a situation where they should be under a necessity of practising

immorality ; much less a son of Abraham, one on whom He had promised to bestow an extraordinary blessing. If the Ishmaelites had a large tract of country to themselves, as the Scriptures inform us they had, there was no occasion for them to injure others, for their own territories were sufficient to afford them affluence.

Abraham lived to see the sons of Isaac fifteen years old.

It is a great confirmation of the truth of the prophecies in general, to see so ancient a one fulfilling at this very time. How wonderful it is to think that there should exist a Being so infinitely wise, as to see at once the beginning and the end of all things, even before they are created ! and such a Being is God.

SECTION XXXI.

HISTORY OF ISAAC.

From Genesis, Chap. xxvi.

AND there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And the LORD appeared unto Isaac, and said, Go not down into Egypt : dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of :

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee : for unto thee and unto thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father :

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven ; and I will give unto thy seed all these countries : and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

And

And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar.

And Abimelech the king charged his servants, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death.

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred fold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great.

For he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great stores of servants: And the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they strove with him.

And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well, and for that they strove not; and he called the name of it Rehoboth: and he said, for now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father : fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there : and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phicol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

And they said : We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee : and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace ; thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another : and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Sheba : therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Famine is reckoned among those judgments which are inflicted by the hand of GOD, to awaken wicked nations
to

to a sense of their sins*. That which happened in the days of Isaac seems to have been designed for the punishment of the idolatrous people, and shews that they were not cut off without warnings. It appears that GOD commanded Isaac† to go from Canaan while the famine lasted, and directed him to the land of the Philistines instead of Egypt, to which we may presume he had purposed to go. But before he departed he was taught to consider Canaan as his home; and to dispel from his mind those fears which the famine naturally gave rise to, the Covenant, which the LORD had formerly made with Abraham, was renewed to him; and that Isaac might understand that God's favour to his faithful servants is not limited to the short term of their existence in this world, the LORD assured him, that, in granting the blessing to him, he meant to do a farther honour to Abraham, which implied that Abraham still existed, though no longer on earth.

The king of the Philistines could scarcely be the same with whom Abraham made an alliance; but it is imagined, that Abimelech was a general name for the kings of that country. Isaac inconsiderately practised the same kind of evasion which Abraham had before done, by endeavouring to make his wife pass for his sister; but as this subject has already been considered‡, it is omitted in this section.

The success which Isaac met with in the great increase of his first harvest in the land of the Philistines, and his subsequent prosperity, were proofs that the Providence of God constantly attended him.

We cannot suppose that the family of Isaac was equal in number and power to the nation of the Philistines:

* See Lev. xxvi. 20. Deut. xxviii. 23. Amos iv. 6.

† I have taken the liberty of making a transposition in this section, which I hope the context justifies. ‡ See Section xvi.

the expression of Abimelech, *Thou art greater and mightier than we*, must not be understood literally, but comparatively. The wonderful increase of Isaac's substance had raised the envy of the Philistines, who murmured at seeing a foreigner more prosperous in their land than themselves.

In the valley of Gerar, Isaac had a sort of hereditary right to dwell, for a former king had granted to his father the liberty of choosing any part of the country for his residence; and this was the spot Abraham fixed upon; and Isaac had an undoubted claim to the wells which his father digged, because that Patriarch had actually *purchased* a title to them*. It was this consideration in all probability that chiefly influenced Isaac to open them rather than dig new ones. Beer-sheba had been consecrated by Abraham, who planted a grove there, and built an altar to the LORD. No sooner was Isaac arrived at this sacred spot, than he was honoured with a Divine vision, and a fresh ratification of the Covenant respecting temporal blessings: from a principle of gratitude for the promises vouchsafed to him, we find that he also built an altar, and resolved to abide in that place.

It seems that Abimelech feared the true God, or he would not have been so solicitous to make an alliance with Isaac, merely from a conviction that he was peculiarly blessed of the LORD. It is very remarkable, that the well which Abraham named Beer-sheba, or the well of the oath, in witness of the Covenant made between him and the king of the Philistines, should be discovered to Isaac on the very day that he was in similar circumstances. It is likely that the news arrived before his royal guest had left him, and that he restored the name to do honour to his father's memory;

* See Section xvi.

and also that the well might, agreeably to its first destination, serve as a testimony of the covenant which he had just renewed.

The name Phicol seems to have titularly belonged to the office of chief captain of the army. Who Ahuz-zath was we are not told, but he was doubtless a person of distinction.

It is evident, from the words in which the promise at the beginning of this section was conveyed to Isaac, that the *Divine Being* who made it, was the same LORD that appeared to Abraham, and we find him in the second vision, calling himself the GOD of *Abraham*.

It is needless to expatiate further on this passage of Scripture; for, after contemplating the history of Abraham, the reflections and practical instruction it is calculated to convey, will naturally arise in the mind of an attentive reader.

SECTION XXXII.

**ESAU SELLETH HIS BIRTH-RIGHT—HE MARRIETH
TWO WIVES.**

From Genesis, Chap. xxv.

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth right.

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right to do me?

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles;

and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way : thus Esau despised his birth-right.

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite : which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Esau and Jacob were twin brothers ; but as Esau was the first-born, he had, as we may suppose, a superiority in his father's house, and seems to have expected, as his *birth-right*, to be heir of the promises which God had made to Abraham and Isaac, one part of which was, that *God would be their God* in a peculiar manner.

Fond of the sports of the field, Esau pursued them with such ardor, that he left himself little time for considering the value of the privileges to which he made pretensions, or he would not have parted with them so easily. The Apostle * to the Hebrews represents the sale of the birth-right as a *profane* action, which it could not have been, had it related to *temporal* blessings only.

Jacob, on the other hand, seems to have had a sincere faith in the promises of God, and an urgent desire to possess the blessings which were promised to the seed of Abraham and Isaac. It is most likely that Rebekah had made known to Jacob, who was her darling son, what the LORD had revealed to her, before his birth, concerning the superiority which the nation that was to proceed from him should have over that which was to proceed from Esau. This, however, is no excuse for Jacob ; he certainly took an unjustifiable method to obtain the birth-right ; and we must not consider his success in this instance as a proof of the Divine favour : for it

* Hebrew xi. 16.

will appear, as we proceed, that it did not eventually advance his *personal happiness*, neither did it *procure* the blessing of Abraham for his posterity ; for before he, or Esau, had done good or evil, before they were born into the world, the LORD had determined, that, in respect to the *nations* which should spring from them, the *elder should serve the younger**, as has been already observed in a former section.

Esau's marriage with a Canaanitish woman was another instance of *profaneness* ; for he could not be ignorant that it was of material consequence, for those who honoured the LORD, and were designed to be His peculiar people, to avoid alliances with Idolators.

From this section, we learn, that it is very wrong to give up the mind entirely to any pursuit, to the exclusion of *religious meditation* ; had Esau accustomed himself to reflect on the value of the privileges annexed to the birth-right, he would not have been so ready to relinquish the title which he supposed he had to them. In his father's house, he could scarcely be in danger of starving ; therefore, we may conclude, that he preferred the gratification of his appetite with a savoury dish, to the greatest spiritual advantages. How many people in the world, like Esau, resign the title, which the *Christian covenant* gives them, to the providential care of God in this world, and the hope of a heavenly inheritance in the next, for the sports of the field, and the pleasures of the table !

In his desire to secure to himself the blessing of the LORD, we should imitate Jacob ; but not in his attempt to secure it by unlawful means. He certainly was very wrong in taking advantage of his brother's necessities ; and the following part of his history shews, that he brought great distresses upon himself by doing so. Esau, however, deserved the punishment which, by divine per-

* See Section xxix.

mission, fell upon him; and Christians should take warning by it, not to prefer any thing this world can afford to the *blessing of God*, which under the Christian covenant comprises all that is really needful both for the body and the soul.

SECTION XXXIII.

JACOB DECEIVETH HIS FATHER.

From Genesis, Chap. xxvii.

AND it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

And he said, Behold now I am old; I know not the day of my death. Now therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat: that my soul may bless thee before I die.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son; and Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD, before my death.

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, according to that which I command thee; Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; My
fat he

father peradventure will feel me, And I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.

And she gave the savoury meat, and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.

And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father, and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And Isaac said, Art thou my very son Esau? and he said, I am. And Isaac said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee:

thee : and he brought it near to him, and he did eat : and he brought him wine, and he drank.

And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kisssd him : and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field, which the LORD hath blessed.

Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee ; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee : cursed be every one that curs-eth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

And it came to pass as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And he also made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father ; and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou ? and he said, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and he said, Who ? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me ; and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him ? yea, and he shall be blessed.

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And Isaac said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

And Esau said, Is not he rightily named Jacob ? for he hath supplanted me these two times : He took away my birth-right ; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing :

blessing : and he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me ?

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him : and what shall I do now unto thee my son ?

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father ? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above ;

And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother : and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is something so affecting in the account which is given in this section of Esau's disappointment, that the heart which can forbear to commiserate his distress must be totally destitute of sensibility ; yet however we may be inclined to pity *him* and condemn *Jacob*, Esau will be found, on an impartial examination of his conduct, to have been still more culpable than his brother. Neither of them could indeed justly claim the *blessing* as the reward of his *merits*, nor was it, as we observed before*, designed as a *reward* for any *works* of theirs, but as a *free gift* from God to the *posterity* of *Abraham* in the *line* of *Jacob*, for purposes of mercy to *all mankind*.

But though the LORD thus predetermined the lot of the *nations* which Jacob and Esau represented, (as the heads from whom they were to proceed) He left them

* Section xxxii.

as *individuals* (like the rest of the human race) to the exercise of their own *free will*, both in respect to faith and moral actions: we will therefore, for the present suspend the farther consideration of the *Divine ordinance* in respect to the *predestination* of one people to *supremacy*, and the other to *subjection*, since we find that it was the business of an *Apostle**, not of the *Jewish historian*, to vindicate the justice of God in this particular.

Moses describes the conduct of the different parties concerned in this transaction, as merely the result of *human inclinations*, uncontrouled by *Divine power*, so far as it related to their own persons.

It will appear, in a following part of this history, that Isaac lived for a number of years after the event which is here recorded; but when he found the infirmities of age increasing upon him, and felt a sensible decay of his faculties, it was very natural for him to fear that his end was approaching.

Esau seems to have made it one of the pleasures of his life to shew his affection for his father, by procuring venison, and dressing it for him in a manner agreeable to his palate. Without imputing luxury to Isaac, we may conceive that he took particular delight in eating of this dish; for every parent knows, that the dutiful attention of a child can give a value to the most trifling services.

Jacob who was naturally of a very timid disposition, observing the great ascendancy which his brother had gained over his father, attached himself, as we find, more particularly to his mother; and each parent indulged a partiality, which inclined them respectively to promote the interest of their particular favourites. This in all probability, gave rise to those jealousies and animosities, which prevented the harmony that ought to subsist in all families.

* See Rom. ix.

Whether a decay of memory betrayed Isaac into the error, is not mentioned ; but he appears to have forgotten what the LORD had revealed to his wife, for he resolved to give to Esau the *paternal blessing*, (which appears to have been the appointed means for the conveyance of the *everlasting covenant*), and to shew that he meant to bestow the blessing on Esau, as the reward of his filial piety, he required him to bring venison, that he might sanctify an action which had so peculiarly endeared him to his heart, by making it a kind of *witness or token*, on this solemn occasion. Isaac testified a sincere faith in the Divine promises, but, in his preference of Esau, he certainly acted on a wrong principle.

Rebekah also believed in the promises, and never lost sight of the *Divine revelation* which she had been favoured with before the birth of her children. Anxious to secure the blessing for Jacob, and supposing that she was co-operating with the will of God, she thought herself justified in employing artifices to obtain it.

Equally apprehensive of losing what he valued above all things, and accustomed to pay implicit obedience to his mother, Jacob thought it is duty to yield to her commands, even in opposition to the dictates of his own conscience ; under this mistaken idea, he, with reiterated falsehood, deceived his aged father !

Both Rebekah and Jacob were commendable for having a due esteem for the paternal benediction : but nothing can justify their attempt to bring about the accomplishment of a Divine prophecy, by a complication of frauds ; it appears, however, to have been a precipitate act, the result of inconsideration, rather than premeditated wickedness.

It is conjectured that the raiment which Jacob put on when he went to his father, was a dress which Esau had to distinguish him as the eldest son.

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The behaviour of Isaac to the supposed Esau, shews, that he meant to make him heir to the promises at first vouchsafed by the LORD to Abraham, and afterwards confirmed to himself. The words in which he pronounced the blessing were evidently a *prophecy*, and they perfectly agreed with that prediction concerning the *everlasting covenant*, which the LORD himself had formerly declared *.

Isaac was certainly wrong in proceeding in so momentous an affair without seeking GOD's direction, or referring to the Divine revelation, which had been formerly made.

However Esau might have despised his birth-right, he was not ignorant of the value of the Divine promises; nor does he seem to have been destitute of faith in them, for he readily made preparations for receiving the paternal benediction; but his faith was not productive of obedience; so far was he from being perfectly devoted † to the LORD, that he intermarried with those very nations who were designed to be cut off for their wickedness, and he transferred the birth-right to Jacob, and solemnly called upon the LORD Himself ‡ as a witness of his willingness to forego the advantage of having Him as a GOD, which was a principal part of the *everlasting covenant*. Had the blessing been merely *personal*, surely he would have deserved to lose it. And in fact it was, properly speaking, Esau who was the *supplanter*, or Jacob had a right to the blessing, both by Divine appointment, and the solemn resignation of Esau.

Isaac's violent agitation, when he discovered the fraud that had been practised on him, may be imputed to a sudden recollection that he had opposed the revealed will of GOD, in intending to give to his eldest son the blessing destined for the youngest. It is evident that

* Gen. xvii. 8. † Gen. xxvi. 34. ‡ Gen. xxvi. 34.

Isaac did not design to offend the LORD ; on the contrary, he resisted the earnest importunities, and even bitter tears of a darling son, and could not be prevailed upon to make a *deliberate* attempt to counteract the decree of Heaven, but *voluntarily* confirmed the blessing, which he had *inadvertently* pronounced.

All that Isaac could do to console Esau, was, to pronounce the blessing which God designed for *his* posterity ; and it is remarkable, that it was equal in value to that pronounced on Jacob's, excepting in the circumstance of *supremacy*, and that even this was to continue only for a season.

The practical instruction which Reason teaches us to collect from this section, seems to be, that fathers and mothers should not give a partial preference to any one of their children. That brothers ought not to endeavour to circumvent each other ; that the practice of deceit and falsehood, even from pious motives, will cast an odium upon the best characters : and that parents should not entice their children into sin ; nor children yield to their parents' persuasions, when their own consciences tell them, that by doing so they will offend GOD.

We have not, like the patriarchs, particular revelations concerning the future prosperity of our descendants ; but a title to a share in the *Everlasting Covenant* has been purchased for *us*, and for *our children*. The means to secure this title are proposed in the Scriptures ; therefore, instead of endeavouring, with a too anxious solicitude for their *worldly* interest, to do the work of Divine Providence in their behalf, let us instil into the minds of our children lessons of piety, and accustom them to study the oracles of GOD as the best rules of moral conduct ; then will they be upright and sincere in all their words and actions, and affectionately united to each other, and the LORD Himself will bestow on them his choicest blessings, both *temporal* and *eternal*.

SECTION

SECTION XXXIV.

ISAAC BLESSETH JACOB, AND SENDETH HIM TO
PADAN ARAM.

From Genesis, Chap. xxvii.

AND Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him : and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah : and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau as touching thee doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother, to Haran : and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away, until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him : then I will send and fetch thee from thence : why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth : if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me ?

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father ; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people :

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and

to thy seed with thee ; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

And Isaac sent away Jacob : and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We observed in the last section, that had the BLESSING, which was the object of contention between the two brothers, been a *personal* one, Esau deserved to lose it ; and the same may be said in respect to Jacob, who soon found to his sorrow, that those honours, which are purchased at the expence of sincerity and truth, cannot be enjoyed with tranquillity of mind. Instead of being treated as the *heir of the promises*, he was obliged, in order to save his life, to leave his native home, forsake his aged father, and tear himself from the arms of his indulgent mother. He, who had been accustomed from his infancy to a quiet domestic life, was under the necessity of undertaking a long fatiguing journey of 450 miles, without a single attendant to direct his steps, or soothe his sorrows. He was even destitute of the means of subsistence for any length of time. He could not request his father to give him a younger son's portion ; and besides, Isaac was led to believe, that Jacob undertook the journey merely in search of a wife : neither could Jacob carry any great stock of provisions with him. He was indeed going to his mother's relations ; but many misfortunes might befall him by the way ; and it was probable the family of Laban would not receive him, or grant him a settlement among them. He had no flocks or herds to begin the world with ; nor do we read that he was, like Ishmael, skilled in archery.

From

From these circumstances it is evident, that, in respect to his own immediate happiness, it would have been better for Jacob, at that time, to have lived in a subordinate rank to his brother.

An equal punishment fell upon Rebekah; for we may easily conceive that she suffered extreme distress of mind at first, from the apprehension that Esau would actually kill Jacob; and afterwards, from being obliged to part with the object of her tenderest affections.

Here appears then no *partiality* in the dispensations of Providence in respect to the two brothers; for Jacob was immediately punished, by being launched into the wide world to seek his fortune; and Esau left without a rival, to enjoy all the comforts and advantages, which the paternal roof afforded.

The threat which Esau threw out against Jacob was, in all probability, uttered while he was under violent perturbation of mind, occasioned by his disappointment of the paternal blessing; for it does not appear that he made any actual attempt to take away his brother's life, or that he retained his hatred.

Rebekah took a very prudent step, in sending Jacob to her own relations, and is not to be blamed for the excuse she made for doing so; because the desire that he should marry in her family, was doubtless *one* of her reasons for wishing him to go thither; and had she told the *whole* truth to her husband, while he was in such a weak state of health, it might have occasioned his death; at least it would have raised his anger against Esau, and there is no knowing what bad consequences might have ensued to all parties.

We may easily conceive, from the general character of Jacob, that his heart was overwhelmed with affliction, when he found, that he must leave all his tender connections behind him; and though the Sacred Historian

rian is silent in this particular, it is most likely that he felt contrition for the part he had acted.

The prayer which Isaac offered up, when he dismissed Jacob, shews, that he was satisfied his paternal blessing had been bestowed agreeably to the Divine will; and we may also understand from it, that this blessing included every particular contained in the original blessing, bestowed by the Lord on *Abraham**. This was the portion Jacob had so solicitously sought for, and with this he was contented. He asked for no provision from his father; but taking his *staff* in his hand†, he bade adieu to his native home, and committed himself to the care of that God, whose promises he firmly believed.

Esau, by degrees, became sensible of his errors. A recent instance had convinced him of his folly in selling his birth-right. He next repented that he had displeased his father, by marrying idolatrous women; and endeavoured to repair his fault by taking another wife, who he thought would be more agreeable to him: but his repentance availed nothing; nor indeed would a conduct the reverse of that which he had pursued have made any difference in respect to that peculiar blessing, in consequence of which, one branch of Abraham's family was to be separated to the LORD in an extraordinary manner; and from whom should descend the *promised seed of the woman*, to bless all the families of the earth, by redeeming them from the curse threatened to mankind before the fall, in case they committed sin, *Thou shalt surely die*.

We are left to make our own reflections on this part of Sacred History; and, therefore, are at liberty to approve or condemn, as our reason, and the knowledge

* Gen. xii. 2, 3.

† Gen. xxxii. 10.

we have acquired from other parts of Divine revelation, shall suggest.

There is something so very unnatural in *hating a brother*, that no provocation can justify it to the common feelings of humanity ; and we learn, from the instance of Cain, that if carried to such a height as to end in murder, it is highly provoking to God. Happily for Esau, he was prevented by Jacob's flight from executing the wicked purpose he had formed : or what would have been the sufferings of a mind like his, subject to transports of vehement passions, had he actually killed his brother ? All persons should endeavour to strengthen themselves against temptations to so horrid a sin, by cherishing tender affection for those who stand in so near a degree of relation to them ; and should accustom themselves to have as great a regard for the interest and prosperity of their brothers and sisters, as for their own. Abraham gave an example of this in his behaviour to Lot, who was only his nephew. *Let there be no strife* said he, *between me and thee, are we not BRETHREN ?* It is easy to see, that had Jacob and Esau acted upon this principle, neither of them would have had a desire of circumventing the other ; but each would have left the affair of the birthright to be determined by the will of Heaven.

When family disputes arise to so unfortunate a height, that there is no prospect of effecting a reconciliation, prudence requires, that mothers should, like Rebekah, endeavour to separate the contending parties ; and conceal, as far as possible, from each of them, every thing that may have a tendency to increase their animosities. The quarrels of their children are among the things which a wife may forbear to reveal to her husband, in cases where his interposition is not likely to be of use,
and

and when the knowledge of them will only add to his cares, and perhaps shorten his days with sorrow.

Every person, who feels a conviction of mind that a measure, which they wish to pursue, is contrary to the revealed will of God, should immediately, like Isaac, change their purpose, and preserve in their known duty on all future occasions. And whoever is conscious that he has acted wrong, by endeavouring to anticipate Providence, should, like Jacob, acquiesce in the natural consequences of his precipitation, and arm his mind with patience to endure the worst that can befall him.

SECTION XXXV.

JACOB'S VISION.

From Genesis, Chap. xxviii.

AND Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending, and descending on it.

And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again
into

into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob waked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the LORD be my God.

And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though it is not expressly mentioned, there is great reason to believe, from Jacob's habitual piety, and the favour which was shewed him by the LORD, that he implored Divine forgiveness for yielding to the temptations which a fond mother had inconsiderately thrown in his way; and that he professed a firm faith in the predictions which his father by Divine inspiration had pronounced.

Jacob now experienced a great change in his condition. Instead of enjoying the endearing society of tender parents, and all the accommodations of domestic life, to which he, who had ever dwelt in tents*, was

* Gen. xxv. 27.

accustomed, he found himself alone, weary and benighted in a place which afforded him no shelter from the cold air, nor any bed but the hard ground; so that he may be said to have had no earthly comfort: yet we do not find that he murmured at his lot, or gave up his mind to despondency; on the contrary, he with great composure placed a stone for his pillow, and lay down to sleep; from whence we may reasonably infer, that he relied on the mercy and goodness of God.

The dream, which Jacob dreamed at this time, was of a similar nature with that which Abraham had, when the LORD made a covenant with him*; and we find that he regarded it as an evident manifestation of the DIVINE PRESENCE. It was indeed a *vision*, like those afterwards seen by the Jewish Prophets†, in which representations were made to the mind, by the miraculous power of God, without the usual instruments of sight.

The ladder ‡ which Jacob beheld may be understood in an *emblematical* sense. Its being set on the earth, seems to denote the steadiness of Providence, which no created being is able to unsettle. Its reaching up to Heaven to signify, its universality or extension to all things. The several steps of the ladder may be regarded as the motions and actions of Providence, the angels going up and down, as the great ministers of Providence, never idle, but constantly executing the Divine will, either in heaven or on earth. The LORD on the top evidently denotes, that he is the *visible image of the invisible God*, overlooking, governing, and preserving all things: and it is to be observed, that the LORD was, in this vision, eminently distinguished from

* Gen. xv. 12; or Section xviii.

† Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and St. John.

‡ See Stackhouse on the Bible.

the *Angelic Host* ; and that He declared himself to be the GOD of Abraham and Isaac, that is, the ALMIGHTY GOD*.

In respect to Jacob, this dream was particularly calculated to furnish his mind with hope and comfort against the various turns of fortune which it would be his fate to experience. The promises conveyed to him in the paternal benediction were, as we have already remarked, *national*, and related to his posterity. At this time the LORD graciously vouchsafed to promise him *personal* blessings. Though these promises were made while the powers of his body were suspended, Jacob doubted not the reality of them ; but considered the spot on which he slept as *sanctified* by the DIVINE PRESENCE, like those on which GOD had appeared to Abraham and Isaac, where we may suppose these faithful servants frequently assembled their households and dependants, before any buildings were erected for public worship.

No wonder that Jacob was so sensibly affected with awe and reverence, by the glorious scenes that were presented to *his mind's eye*, and that he fancied himself at the *gate of heaven* ! He seems to have conceived, that the LORD was graciously entering into a *personal covenant* with him, in addition to that which concerned his posterity ; and he was so well acquainted with the principles of religion, that he knew the Divine promises were *conditional*, and required something to be done on his part ; therefore, without waiting for the *Divine command*, he *voluntarily* promised, in the most solemn manner, that if it should please GOD to grant him but such a moderate supply of the necessaries of life, as would sustain nature ; give him an opportunity of returning to his father's house ; and bless him with the

* Gen. xvii. 1 ; or Section xx.

means of shewing his gratitude, he would honour the LORD as his GOD, in the way his fathers had done; that he would commemorate the Divine goodness at that place; and make a willing offering of the increase of his substance for religious uses.

There is something in Jacob's vow peculiarly modest, and suitable to the condition of a man, who possessed nothing of his own at that time, but depended entirely on the bounty of heaven for a future supply.

It will appear, that Jacob considered the LORD as his GOD, for this *instant*; and that he never gave himself up to idolatrous practices, in the midst of his severest trials.

The ceremony which Jacob observed, of pouring oil on the stone which had been his pillow, signified the consecration of it to GOD. As the LORD permitted this act, we may conclude, that he prevented the stone from being taken away; and that it remained there, to put Jacob in mind of his vow; and likewise to keep up the remembrance of it among his descendants.

This section affords a striking proof, that God's particular providence watches over His servants; that He is about their bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways*; that He has compassion on their infirmities, and supports their minds under difficult circumstances.

The LORD, in his vision to Jacob, declared, that He is really God; let us, then, acknowledge and worship Him as such, and implore His protection at all times, particularly when we are under the necessity of taking perilous journeys. If it be our fate to leave our native country, and travel to a land where the LORD is either not known, or worshipped in a superstitious manner, let us not suppose, that *He is not there*; for as GOD was

* Ps. cxxxix. 3.

with Jacob in *all places*, so will He be with every one that honours His holy name, and wishes for communion with Him. The LORD, it is true, has not actually made a personal covenant with us, like that he made with Jacob; but we have, as a *nation*, a share with the rest of *the families of the earth* in the *Everlasting Covenant*; and from God's promises to the Patriarchs, we may understand, what *kind* of blessings He will bestow on *individuals*, who adhere to Him; for God is *no respecter of persons*.

Christians, like Jacob, have a painful pilgrimage to perform on earth; but if they continue stedfast in the service of the LORD, He will sustain them with food and raiment, and comfort them with the hopes of finally enjoying *peace in their father's house*, even in the *mansions of eternity*; and the painful conflicts and vicissitudes of life shall, like Jacob's ladder, prove steps to conduct them to that blessed abode, in which the LORD displays the glory of the ineffable GODHEAD.

SECTION XXXVI.

JACOB HIRES HIMSELF TO LABAN, AND MARRIES LEAH
AND RACHEL.

From Genesis, Chap. xxix.

THEN Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold, a well in the field, and lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it: for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the
sheep,

sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? and they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? and they said, We know him.

And he said unto them, Is he well? and they said, He is well: And behold Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

And they said, We cannot until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth; and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house, and he told Laban all these things.

And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my
I 3 brother,

brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought : tell me what shall thy wages be ?

And Laban had two daughters : the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed : but Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured.

And Jacob loved Rachel ; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man ; abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her unto him.

And Jacob said unto him, What is this thou hast done unto me ? did I not serve thee for Rachel ? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me ?

And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born.

Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

And Jacob did so, and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Animated by the Divine promises, Jacob was encouraged to pursue his journey ; for he now knew, as a certainty, that he was under the particular protection of DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Considering

Considering Jacob's circumstances, we cannot wonder that he felt such extraordinary emotions of joy as drew tears from his eyes when he found in his mother's family a woman so agreeable to his wishes.

It appears that Jacob did not remain an idle guest in his uncle's house, he endeavoured to make himself useful: but justice required, that as he was destitute of a provision, and earned more than his maintenance cost, he should have wages.

It was at that time a custom in contracting marriages, that as the wife brought a portion to her husband, he should make some present to her friends in return. Jacob therefore being destitute of money, offered to his uncle seven years service, which was equivalent to a large sum. Why he did not rather send to his father for a supply the Scripture does not mention; but it is likely that Jacob having received such gracious promises from God, thought it incumbent on him to depend upon the blessing of Providence, on his own labours, rather than to ask assistance from his friends: and Isaac might be restrained from providing for him (as Abraham was in the case of Ishmael) by a Divine command.

The custom of having a plurality of wives prevailed generally in that part of the world, and Jacob did not know it was wrong to comply with it. From Jacob's example in working for Laban, we are instructed, that the best way for persons in necessity to ensure a welcome among relations, is to endeavour to be useful to them. The treachery of Laban needs no comment.

SECTION XXXVII.

HISTORY OF JACOB CONTINUED.

From Genesis, Chap. xxx.

And when the LORD saw that Jacob hated Leah, he

gave her six sons, and they were named Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; and she had a daughter called Dinah; but Rachel had no children, and Rachel envied her sister, and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld children from thee? And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and she bare a son, and she called his name Joseph.

And Jacob had two other wives, Bilhah the handmaid of Rachel, and Zilpha the handmaid of Leah: and Bilhah bare two sons named Dan and Napthali, and Zilpah bare Gad and Assur.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.

And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased into a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

And he said, What shall I give thee? and Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock:

I will

I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be accounted stolen with me.

And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

And he removed that day the he-goats that were ring-straked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

And he set three days journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

And it came to pass, that the flocks brought forth cattle, ring-straked, speckled, and spotted.

And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We here find, that soon after Jacob's settlement in esopotamia, the Divine promises began to operate. An increase of family gave him a prospect of the accomplishment of that part of the covenant by which he was taught to expect, that a *great nation would proceed from him*; and without doubt he placed his dependance on the *promised seed* arising from it.

It was a very heavy disappointment to Rachel, that she was not likely to share the honour which such a

numerous progeny would bring on her husband ; yet he justly reprov'd her impatience under it, because *children are an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD* ; and to murmur at his withholding them is sinful *.

Jacob having, as we may conclude, fully completed his last seven years, was naturally desirous of returning into his own country ; and having, besides, a large family to support, we cannot wonder that he should wish to have something of his own, rather than continue to live in a state of dependance with a mercenary relation.

Jacob had a right to expect that Laban would now give him some portion with his daughters, as he had found such advantages from his connexion with him.

The terms which Jacob made with Laban appear very reasonable ; and we must consider the great increase of the particular kinds of cattle, goats, and sheep, which he fixed upon, entirely as an act of Providence ; for Jacob could not foresee that there would be so great a proportion of ring-straked, &c. neither was it in his power by any human art to make one hair of them white or black † ‡.

The extraordinary blessing which followed Jacob's services, might be intended partly to encourage his faith in the Divine promises ; and partly to point him out to the world as a man peculiarly favoured of the LORD.

We learn from this section, that it is good policy to

* Psalm cxxvii. 3.

† Matt. v. 36.

‡ As Jacob's conduct in respect to peeling the rods (which I have omitted) has the appearance of artifice, it may be proper to remark, that it is most likely he was required to do this, in order to express his faith in God, by whose suggestion he had fixed upon the cattle that were speckled, &c. By this sign then he may be understood to have testified his firm belief, that the LORD was able to make cattle produce young ones of any colours, and that he certainly would make Laban's have speckled ones, since He had directed Jacob to name such for his wages.

employ in our domestic concerns persons of piety and integrity. Such people acting from *principle*, will be anxious to make their *righteousness* or *fidelity* appear, and perhaps it is the ordinary course of Divine Providence to send a blessing on their labours.

We also learn, that faithful servants may expect a reward from God, when their services are not properly recompensed by their employers.

SECTION XXXVIII.

JACOB DEPARTETH FROM MESOPOTAMIA.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxi.

AND Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and behold it was not toward him as before.

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred: and I will be with thee.

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before: but the God of my father hath been with me.

And ye know that with all my power I have served your father: and your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times: but God suffered him not to hurt me.

If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages: then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then bare all the

cattle ring-straked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

And it came to pass, that the Angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob ; and I said, Here am I ; and he said, I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me : now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

And Rachel and Leah answered, and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house ? Are we not counted of him strangers ? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours and our children's : now then whatsoever God hath said unto thee do.

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels ; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

And Laban went to shear his sheep : and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had, and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward mount Gilead.

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled : and he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey ; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his

his tent in the mount : and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives taken with the sword ?

Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me ? and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp ?

And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters ? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt : but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

And now though thou wouldst needs be gone because thou sore longest after thy father's house ; yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods ?

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid : for I said, Peradventure thou wouldst take by force thy daughters from me.

With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live : before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee : for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid servants tents ; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them : and Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban : and Jacob answered, and said to Laban, What is my trespass ?

pass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

These twenty years have I been with thee: thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee: I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou: and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

And

And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban called it Jegar sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed: And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day; therefore was the name of it called Galeed: and Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us: See, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee. This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me for harm.

The GOD of Abraham and the GOD of Nahor, the GOD of their father, judge betwixt us.

And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is something so uncomfortable in living among relations, who are jealous and envious, that Jacob's desire of leaving Mesopotamia, in order to be out of the way of Laban and his sons, appears very natural.

We find that they set no account by his own labour; but, because he had grown rich while connected with them,

them, they supposed every thing he possessed to belong to Laban ; but in saying, that *Jacob had taken away all that was their father's*, they accused him unjustly ; for we read in a former section, that when Jacob settled with his father-in-law the terms of his hire, a separation was made of all Laban's cattle, and the *white* ones only were committed to his care ; the others were given into the hands of Laban's sons, and removed three days journey from Jacob's charge. According to this agreement, Laban had no property in any that proceeded from these flocks and herds, unless they were *white* also ; for the cattle, &c. that were *speckled* or *straked* were allotted to Jacob, as a consideration for the time he spent in Laban's service, therefore were as justly his property, as if he had purchased them with money.

We find, from Jacob's complaints to his wives, as well as from his subsequent expostulations with Laban, that he had conducted himself with the strictest equity ; and that, in order to satisfy his father-in-law, he had submitted to a change of wages every time the cattle bore young ones, which, in that country, was twice a year. A most unpleasant life surely had Jacob ! toiling and slaving night and day, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, and fretted with the discontent of those for whom he had acquired great wealth, but who nevertheless could not bear to see him making any provision for his own increasing family. Yet all this Jacob patiently endured, till the LORD expressly called him to return into his own country ; for he considered himself as heir to the promises, and, as such, entirely at God's disposal.

It is observable, that in the dream which Jacob related to his wives, he was reminded of the covenant which God made with him at Bethel, and of his own vow. The LORD had been with him, and given him
“ food

“ food to eat, and raiment to put on,” and was now about to conduct him “ to his father’s house in peace ;” it was therefore his duty to obey the Divine summons, and to fulfil his part of the covenant, which till now he had had no opportunity of doing.

Jacob’s wives seem to have been sharers with him in the uneasiness he suffered from the discontent of their father and brethren. The change which was effected in Laban’s mind, when he was pursuing Jacob with purposes of vengeance, verifies the royal Psalmist’s words, who says, “ *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath restrain**.” This seasonable interposition of Divine Providence was an instance of God’s favour to Jacob in particular, but it proved a mercy to all parties ; for had not the wrath of Laban been restrained, there would have been a dreadful contest, when he and his sons overtook the fugitives : but it is to be observed, that there was no *absolute* restraint laid upon Laban’s *free will*, for he told Jacob that he was still possessed of the *power* to hurt him : his forbearance, therefore, is to be attributed to the fear of God, and a conviction in his mind that he was before going to commit sin.

What the *gods* were, which Rachel stole, and why she took them, is uncertain ; nor is it at all material for us to know, because it is evident, that, in this respect, she is not proposed as an example for our imitation. If she made use of them in worship, it must have been in consequence of an erroneous education ; and Jacob, in all probability, had it not in his power to overcome these prejudices, while he was a *sojourner* in a country, addicted to such practices. We shall find, in the course of the history, that as soon as he could, he put a stop

* Psal. lxxvi. 10.

to them in his own family. It is manifest, that Laban believed the LORD to be the SUPREME GOD; and the covenant between him and Jacob seems to have been conducted in a manner conformable to the religion of the Patriarchs.

If Jacob had not been of a very peaceable disposition, he could not have lived for 20 years among spiteful, envious relations. Those who are unhappily under the same circumstances, should take example from him, to bear every thing with patience and good humour, till it shall please GOD to bless them with a prospect of changing their situation for the better; and they should, in the mean while, endeavour to conduct themselves in such an equitable manner, that their actions may be approved in the sight of God; then may they defy calumny, and confidently hope, that his Providence will so order events, that finally *their enemies will be at peace with them**.

Laban himself affords an example worthy of imitation; for he suppressed his resentment, as soon as he knew that, by indulging it, he should offend GOD. Laban had no *written Scriptures* to furnish rules for his conduct; therefore, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to instruct him by *immediate revelation*. Christians have a still greater advantage than Laban had, in being taught their duty, before their passions have gained ground, or they are put to any great trials. From the Book of GOD they may learn in their *childhood*, that they should “cease from anger, and forsake wrath; and in no wise fret themselves to do evil†. That he who is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city‡; and

* Prov. xvi. 7.

† Ps. xxxvii. 6.

‡ Prov. xvi. 32.

that

that they should not let the sun go down upon their wrath.*”

SECTION XXXIX.

JACOB SENDS MESSENGERS TO ESAU.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxii.

And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now.

And I have oxen and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, thou LORD which saith unto

* Eph. iv. 26.

me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee :

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant ; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.

Deliver, me I pray thee, from the hand of my brother from the hand of Esau : for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude,

And Jacob lodged there that same night, and took of that which came to his hand, a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she-goats, and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams.

Thirthy milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foles.

And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves ; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's, it is a present sent unto my lord Esau ; and behold also he is behind us.

And so commanded he the second and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau when you find him.

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind

behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

King David, in one of his Psalms, writes*, that "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD encampeth about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." The portion of Scripture contained in the Section before us, exemplifies this truth.

The ANGEL OF THE LORD, who (as we shall read in the course of this history) is also styled the LORD of Hosts, who had caused a number of celestial beings to watch around the *Heir of the promises*, enabled his eyes to behold them. At first Jacob knew not that these angels were appointed to guard him and his family; and perhaps it was requisite that before this circumstance was made known to him, Jacob should implore help from the LORD.

The remembrance of the deceptions he had practised, in order to secure the birth-right, and of Esau's threat which had driven him into a strange land, awakened in Jacob's mind the most distressing fears. Conscious of his demerits, he could not claim the accomplishment of the Divine promise, *I will be with thee in all places wheresoever thou goest*, till he had humbled himself to

* Psalm xxxiv. 4.

Esau, and done all in his power to appease him ; with this view he sent the messengers to Seir, to acquaint Esau with his approach, and with the means whereby he had acquired the riches which he brought with him. The report of these messengers (as we find) rather increased than lessened Jacob's fears ! for he knew that his brother was *to live by his sword* ; and should it be lifted up against him and his family, he could make no defence. For this reason we may suppose Jacob thought it prudent to approach as an humble suppliant for Esau's favour.

The precaution which Jacob used in dividing his people, &c. into two bands, was a very wise one ; but after all, he could not be certain that his well-concerted measures would succeed, yet nothing else could his own heart devise ; he had therefore recourse to God. The manner of Jacob's address to the DEITY was perfectly consistent with that faith which was reckoned to the Patriarchs for *righteousness*. It was expressive of the utmost humility ; Jacob pleaded no *merits* ; all his hope and expectation of favour were founded upon the *Divine promises*, and the *mercies* which God of his own *free grace* had already granted him.

Jacob did not, however, presumptuously throw himself upon *Providence* ; he still used *human means* ; trusting for a happy event in the goodness of the LORD, who, by a secret influence on his mind, calmed his fears, so that he ventured to send his family on before him.

We have already remarked *, that there is something delightful in the expectation of finding in Heaven a set of benevolent friends, ready to welcome us to those blessed abodes. It is an additional comfort to think, that angels are frequently the invisible com-

* See Section xxiii.

panions of men on earth. Their intercourse with us is of a nature which we cannot understand, because it is spiritual, and therefore it would be to no purpose to endeavour to discover it. But the Scripture teaches us, that they are God's ministers, sent forth to guard all who are *heirs of the promises*, from their spiritual enemies * ; and the idea that such pure intelligences are spectators of our conduct, ought to be an additional motive to circumspection.

In Jacob's distress at the thoughts of meeting Esau, we see the *power of conscience* ; even a Divine promise could not silence his apprehensions, when he reflected on the offences he had committed : How cautious then should every person be to avoid unworthy actions, since they have a natural tendency to abate our confidence in God ! But should we, unfortunately for ourselves, thus wound our peace of mind ; the only remedy that can be sought with success, is, the mercy of God. The LORD alone can supply us with the balm of consolation. And what human being has not at one time or other experienced the want of it ? Who that has supplicated like Jacob, has been denied this heavenly boon ? Let us then on such unhappy occasions earnestly implore our God and Saviour to deliver us, in his infinite goodness, from the consequences of our own misconduct ; using at the same time every means in our power for conciliating the favour of those we have offended.

SECTION XL.

JACOB'S WRESTLING.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxii.

AND Jacob was left alone : and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

* Heb. i. 14.

And

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh: and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name: and he said, wherefore is it, that thou dost ask after my name? and he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place, Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The passage of Scripture contained in this Section is very obscure, and cannot be fully explained. It may be conjectured, that Jacob having conducted his family in safety over the brook Jabbok, returned to the place where he had beheld the angelic host, in order to pass a little time in private devotion at that sacred spot, and entreat the LORD to grant him some evident blessing to support his mind under the conflicts which disturbed it. It is most likely that the wrestling was a
visionary

visionary scene ; but it is clear from Jacob's own words that the Lord manifested His Divine presence to him at this time in an extraordinary manner, and, at his earnest importunity, granted him a blessing, by giving him, in addition to the name he already was known by, that of *Israel*, (or a prince of God) which was designed as a token, that the LORD would favour him and his posterity, for his *own sake*, as well as for the sake of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob was now made a *prince*, which intimated, that on his return to Canaan he should not live in a subordinate capacity. The sudden lameness which seized him, was perhaps inflicted at first to convince, and afterwards to remind him of his own *natural weakness*. That he had *power with God*, was owing to the Divine indulgence alone, as Jacob was well convinced ; for he expressed his astonishment that he had beheld the face (or Image) of God, and was yet alive*.—A very improper use is sometimes made of this portion of Scripture by Enthusiasts, who talk much of *wrestling with God in prayer* ; but, as in this passage, there is no general instruction pointed out by the Sacred Historian, or obvious to human reason, it is best to consider it as a matter relating to Jacob only, as the head of a nation, who, without doubt, understood its import. It is not necessary that Christians should so fully comprehend what seems to have a particular reference to the Jewish œconomy.

SECTION X

JACOB'S RECONCILIATION WITH HIS BROTHER ESAU.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxiii.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men.

* The word *Peniel* signifies the face of God.

And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two hand-maids.

And he put the hand-maids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him ; and they wept.

And he lift up his eyes, and saw the women, and the children, and said, Who are those with thee ? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Then the hand-maidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves ; and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

And Esau said, what meanest thou by all this drove which I met ? And he said, these are to find grace in the sight of my lord.

And Esau said, I have enough ; my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself.

And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand ; for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee ; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough ; and he urged him, and he took it.

And Esau said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

And

And Jacob said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me, and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die.

Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant : and I will lead on softly according as the cattle that goeth before me, and the children be able to endure : until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me ; and Jacob said, What needeth it ? let me find grace in the sight of my lord ?

So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle : therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We learn from another part of Sacred History, that Esau and his family had driven out the Horims, or Horites, who dwelt in mount Seir, and settled themselves in the land *. This happened while Jacob was in Mesopotamia ; Esau therefore became a *prince*, while Jacob was only a *servant* ; this consideration, added to the consciousness of his offence, might induce Jacob to approach his brother in the humble manner which is described in this section. By calling Esau his *lord*, and himself Esau's *servant*, Jacob certainly did not mean to give up his spiritual advantages, but merely to shew his respect, as is still the custom among men who style persons of rank their lords, and themselves their servants, without owing them any particular homage.

From Esau's affectionate behaviour to Jacob, we may infer that he was not upon the whole of a bad disposition ; for no one could testify more generosity and kind-

* Deut. ii. 12.

ness than he did upon this occasion ; the great fault in his character was, slighting the Divine promises.

It is observable, that of the two, Esau appears to have had the highest joy, for his had no alloy. It gave him the sincerest delight to press to his bosom, a brother whom long absence had endeared ; he had the farther satisfaction of shewing his generosity, by freely forgiving former offences. It was an additional pleasure to receive such an accession of new relations : Women whose virtues rendered them ornaments to the family, promising youths, and innocent children. On the other hand, the joy which arose in Jacob's bosom was evidently chastised with fear ; still it *was* joy, and cheaply purchased by that humiliation, which on this occasion it was his duty to shew.

Jacob's expression, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of GOD," implies, that he could not be satisfied without offering something by way of atonement, which he hoped his brother would receive and regard in that light. To have refused his present would have been unkind ; by accepting it, Esau removed his brother's apprehensions, and quieted his conscience. He regarded the present, not only as an atonement for past offences, but as a pledge of future kindness.

It is likely Jacob had other reasons, besides those he mentioned, for not attending his brother to mount Seir, but as he appears to have been of a good natured, gentle disposition, we may readily believe, that he had, as he professed to have, a tender regard to the children and cattle.

Having seen the Host of the LORD, Jacob would have been very blameable had he accepted of a guard from Esau.

We are not told, why Jacob did not *follow* his brother to Seir ; but it is likely that, upon reflection, he thought it

it wrong to go thither, as he had received a Divine command to return into the land of his kindred ; besides, he must have an urgent desire to see his father. Rebekah is supposed to have died during his absence.

As such constant travelling was very fatiguing to his family, and his cattle were near having young ones, it was very prudent in Jacob to stop for a time. The house he built, was, in all probability, little more than a tent. In building booths for his cattle, he gave another instance of benevolence, worthy of imitation.

There is something so truly interesting in the account which is here given of the reconciliation between the two brothers, that every reader must feel its force. May those, who, like Esau, have met with treatment that appears injurious, be ready to take example from his noble conduct ; and may all who have, like Jacob, brought displeasure upon themselves, by indirect practices, be as ready as he was, to subdue resentment by proper concessions ; then will each party know, from happy experience, “how good and joyful a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity* !”

SECTION XLII.

GOD APPEARETH TO JACOB—HE PUTTETH AWAY IDOLS.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxiii. xxxiv. xxxv.

And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram ; and pitched his tent before the city.

And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

* Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel; that is, God, the God of Israel.

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will, make there an altar unto God; who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings, which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak that was by Shechem.

And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them; and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

So Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan (that is Beth-el), he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-bethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

And God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Padan-aram: and blessed him.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel.

And God said unto him, I am God ALMIGHTY; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

And

And GOD went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where GOD talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon, and called the place Beth-el.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As the son of Isaac, and the grandson of Abraham, Jacob had received many blessings; but he had lately been made a *Prince* under the title of *Israel*, and as such, was to give a name to a people. He wisely considered that a *people*, unless under the guidance and protection of GOD, can have no security; his first care, therefore, on his arrival in that country, which was destined to be the future inheritance of his descendants, was to purchase a piece of ground for the express purpose of consecrating it to the LORD; here he built an altar, that he might occasionally assemble his family to join in those sacrifices, which, as has been already observed, made a principal part of the religion of the Patriarchs; but it seems he did not fully accomplish his design.

At this place Jacob might have lived very happily; for the people of the adjacent country were extremely courteous to him: but, through the indiscretion of his daughter Dinah, an unhappy difference arose between the Shechemites and Jacob's sons; in which the latter behaved with such outrageous cruelty, as brought an odium upon the whole family; so that Jacob began to fear a conspiracy would be raised against him by the rest of the Canaanites, and on this account he resolved to remove. While Jacob was deliberating where to fix his habitation, he received a Divine command to go to Bethel. Jacob well remembered his solemn vow, that if he returned in peace, he would consider the pillar which he set up at Bethel as GOD's *house*.

It has been related, that Rachel brought away her father's idols, which she kept carefully concealed : it is not unlikely, but that Leah and her handmaids might have secreted others ; and it is very probable, that when Jacob's sons destroyed the city of Shechem, the captives they took carried with them some of theirs. Now as Jacob had promised, that the LORD should be his only **GOD**, if ever he returned to Bethel, it would have been a violation of his vow, had he suffered any thing to remain in his family that might have been held in any degree of competition with the LORD ; he therefore desired them "to put away the strange gods that were among them." He also required them to wash their bodies, and change their garments : thus intimating, that an entire purification was necessary, in order to their becoming the peculiar people of **GOD**.

How happy must Jacob have been, when the LORD appeared to him at Bethel, and again pronounced him a *Prince of GOD*, giving him likewise the blessing of Abraham ! It was an additional satisfaction to him, to know for a certainty, that the LORD was the **ALMIGHTY GOD**.

It is impossible to obtain an exact idea of Jacob's pillar ; some commentators suppose, that the covenant made between the LORD and Jacob was inscribed on it. It is most likely, that the ceremonies Jacob used were of Divine appointment.

The conclusions suggested by this section are, that the LORD is true to His promises, and omnipotent to perform them ;—that His favour comprehends all the blessings of life, and if so, that it is our truest interest to seek it ; and that when His blessings are showered down upon us, it is our duty to acknowledge, and be thankful for his goodness.

SECTION XLIII.

THE DEATHS OF RACHEL AND ISAAC.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxv.

AND they journeyed from Bethel ; and it came to pass that Rachel bare another son, and his father called him Benjamin ; and Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave : that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah (which is Hebron) where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years : and Isaac gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days : and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan ; and went into the country, from the face of his brother Jacob.

For their riches were more than that they might dwell together : and the land wherein they were strangers, could not bear them, because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir : Esau is Edom.

And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan ; and the sons of Jacob were twelve, Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin ; and his daughter's name was Dinah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Rachel had, with uncommon solicitude, desired an increase of family: little did she think that the completion of her wishes would prove fatal to herself! Jacob felt the most poignant grief at the death of a wife so beloved, but this misfortune served to exercise his patience.

It must have been a great consolation to Jacob, once more to behold his aged father; and, without doubt, the good old patriarch sincerely rejoiced at the return of his son; especially when he found, in the increase of Jacob's family and riches, an earnest of the accomplishment of *all* the Divine promises.

Soon after Jacob's return, Isaac was released from this mortal life; and (as we conclude from the expression *gathered to his fathers*) his soul was received into the state of rest appointed for the departed spirits of good men.

It appears, that Esau, as the eldest son, had for his portion the greatest part, if not all, of his father's riches in the land of Canaan, which he took away with him to Seir; and that Jacob was left in Canaan to increase his substance, by the Providence of God. The Scripture informs us, that the descendants of Esau soon multiplied into a powerful nation called the Edomites, which had many kings, long before* there was any king in Israel.

The twelve sons of Jacob, mentioned in this section, were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, as will be seen in the succeeding part of this history.

From the misfortune which befel Jacob, in the loss of his wife, so soon after he was reconciled to his brother, and had received a confirmation of the blessing of Abraham, we learn to reflect, that no human felicity is

* Gen. xxxvi. 31.

permanent. The ALMIGHTY, who knows *what is in man*, vouchsafes to encourage His servants to the performance of their duty, by setting before them promises of reward, and granting them many favours; and when they are in danger of becoming too confident of their own strength, or too much attached to the things of this world, he calls them back to a sense of their mortal state by afflictions.

Isaac seems to have had a very good heart; and in respect to his *faith*, he was *exemplary*; especially if we suppose him to have been consenting to the sacrifice of himself in obedience to GOD's command; but it must be acknowledged, that his character was not *perfect*; for some things are recorded of him which we cannot but condemn. It is no uncommon thing for scoffers to reject, nay even to deride, the example of the patriarchs, because they erred in some particular instances: should we not rather rejoice to find, that they were men of like infirmities with ourselves, as this circumstance encourages us to copy them in such parts of their conduct as gained them the Divine favour?

SECTION XLIV.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

From Genesis, Chap. xxxvii.

JOSEPH being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren : and they hated him yet the more.

And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

And he told it to his father and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee, unto the earth?

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying. And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said unto him, Here am I.

And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks?

And

And the man said, They are departed hence : for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh.

Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him : and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands ; and said, Let us not kill him : and Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him ; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

And it came to pass when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him : and they took him, and cast him into a pit : and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread ; and they lift up their eyes and looked, and behold a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood ? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him ; for he is our brother, and our flesh : and his brethren were content.

Then there passed by Midianitish merchantmen : and they drew and lift up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

And

And Reuben returned unto the pit ; and behold Joseph was not in the pit : and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not ; and I, whither shall I go ?

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood : and the coat of many colours they brought to their father ; and said, This have we found : know now whether it be thy son's coat or no ?

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him : Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him : but he refused to be comforted ; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning : thus his father wept for him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The sons of Jacob were not all the children of one mother ; for according to the custom of the age he lived in, this patriarch had several wives, viz. Leah and her hand-maid Zilpah ; Rachel and her hand-maid Bilhah. As there were jealousies and dissensions among the women, it is most likely that their children formed parties adverse to each other. Unfortunately for Joseph, he related some things to his father, of which his brothers wished to keep him ignorant.

We are told, that Jacob's partiality to Joseph was on account of his being *the son of his old age*. This could not be the case ; because there was an equal reason for his giving a preference to Zebulun ; and much more for his loving Benjamin better than either of them, as he was 15 years younger ; but critics tell us, that this text
is

is not translated according to the Hebrew idiom, and that it should have been rendered, *because he was a wise and prudent son**.

A learned commentator also informs us, that Joseph's coat, which is in our translation called *a coat of many colours*, might be denominated *a long garment*; and is supposed to have been made down to the heels or ankles, with a border at the bottom, and long sleeves down to the wrist, turned up with the same as the border; which was in ancient times accounted both a noble and honourable dress.

It is evident, that Jacob had a tender solicitude for the welfare of his other sons, or he would not have sent Joseph to inquire after them; and it is apparent, that Joseph himself had an affection for his brethren, by his being so ready to go, and so diligent in seeking them.

Joseph's dreams certainly were from God, and were presages of his future greatness. It was usual, in the early ages of the world, (before there were *Scriptures* especially) for the LORD to make known future events, by a kind of revelations, which are sometimes denominated *visions of the night*. These were very different from common dreams.

Little did poor Joseph think, when the vanity of a youthful heart led him to relate his dreams to his brethren, that he was furnishing food for their envy!

If the sons of Jacob even supposed that Joseph *invented* the dreams, it was very unjust to think of punishing him with death: and if they really thought that he was divinely inspired, it was impious to attempt to frustrate the purpose of the ALMIGHTY.

Reuben, who was the son of Leah, and Jacob's first-born, seems to have been of a more compassionate turn

* Stackhouse on the Bible; also Essay for a new Translation of the Bible.

of mind than Joseph's other brethren. It seems that he did not remain with the rest.

How shocking it is to read, that after having stripped their brother, and thrown him into a pit, they sat down to eat, though they had witnessed the anguish of his soul, and heard his earnest entreaties that they would have compassion on him! Judah seems to have abhorred the sin of fratricide; but he so far agreed with the rest, that he wished the object of their mutual envy to be removed out of the way.

The Midianitish merchantmen are supposed to have been some of the descendants of Midian, one of the sons of Abraham and Keturah; and the Ishmaelites were of the posterity of Ishmael. These travellers seem to have associated together for safety and society, as is still the custom in those eastern countries, which are infested with wild beasts and robbers. Their arrival at this critical period was a providential interposition.

Rending the clothes appears, from several passages of Scripture, to have been the ancient way of expressing grief for calamity, or sorrow for sin.

Jacob's affliction for the loss of his son was very natural; yet he was certainly wrong in *refusing to be comforted*, and in resolving *to mourn to the day of his own death*; but we may suppose that he made use of these expressions in the first transports of his grief, and afterwards patiently submitted to what he concluded to be the will of God.

It is needless to expatiate on the wickedness of Joseph's brethren; but it may be necessary to point out to *young persons*, that they should be very careful not to carry *evil reports* of each other to their parents. Joseph's imprudence in telling tales, and his father's in listening to them, seem to have furnished his brethren with the first pretence for openly expressing their hatred of him: not that this justified their malice; for *they* were men of experience

ence in the world, and ought to have excused Joseph in consideration of his *youth*. Besides, it is a very great meanness as well as a sin to indulge envy on any occasion.

Young persons may farther learn from the error of Joseph, that it is exceedingly dangerous to boast of superior advantages. None, indeed, can expect, like Joseph, to have divine revelations : but we may chance to have distinctions of another kind, from which we may promise ourselves advancement in the world ; in these cases, we should be extremely cautious not to provoke jealousy and envy in the minds of our relations, by exulting over them.

It is shocking to think, that it should ever enter into the hearts of men, *to sell and buy each other for slaves!* Yet how many people are there still existing in the world, who follow this inhuman traffick, with as much composure as Jacob's sons did : one party receiving money in exchange for those, who, if not brethren by *blood*, are so by *nature* ; the other tearing away a promising youth, or helpless virgin (the sole comfort perhaps of their aged parents), a wife from her beloved and affectionate husband, a tender mother from her darling child, never, never more to meet again the dear objects of their best affections ; but condemned, for the remainder of their wretched lives, to the vilest drudgery, the most inhuman cruelty, and the hardest fare ! O that such *unnatural merchandizers* would but reflect on the anguish of mind they occasion ! Anguish, which rankles in the soul, more than an envenomed and barbed arrow in the flesh !

SECTION XLV.

JOSEPH CAST INTO PRISON.

From Genesis, Chap. xxix.

AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt ; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharoah, captain of the guard, an Egyptian,

Egyptain, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man ; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him : and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake : and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had, in the house, and in the field.

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat : and Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph ; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand ; there is none greater in this house than I ; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife : how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?

And it came to pass as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business ; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me :
me :

me : and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, ye have brought in an Hebrew unto us, to mock us : he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice : and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

And she spake unto Potiphar according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me : and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me ; that his wrath was kindled.

And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound : and he was there in the prison.

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison : and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand ; because the LORD was with him : and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though Joseph's cruel brethren sold him into the hands of strangers, who carried him far from that sacred spot, where the LORD was worshipped as the only GOD ; and into a country rendered abominable by the practice of many corruptions ; yet was he not forsaken, or abandoned. In the anguish of his soul, he cried unto the LORD, and He heard him ; and though infinite wisdom saw fit to try the virtues, that he might prove a bright example to the world, Divine goodness accompanied him whithersoever he went : for we may regard it as an instance of GOD's providential care, that he did not fall into the hands of a cruel master.

We may reasonably conclude, from the blessing which attended Joseph's services, that, like his father Jacob when an hireling to Laban, he resolved that *his righteousness should answer for him in the time to come* *.

It appears that Potiphar, though an Egyptian, had a knowledge of the LORD, and an idea of a particular providence, by his perceiving that a Divine blessing attended the services of Joseph, and by the trust which, in consequence of this conviction, he reposed in him. It is likely that Joseph was not invested with the stewardship, till Potiphar had experienced his fidelity in an inferior capacity ; during which period he might attain a knowledge of the Egyptian language, which bore great affinity to that of Canaan.

The expression *He knew not what he had, save the bread which he did eat*, implies the highest degree of confidence.

It is a sad reflection, that a man of so much merit as Potiphar appears to have been, should have had so abandoned a woman for his wife. Her behaviour

* See Section xxxvii.

needs no comment ; every virtuous person who reads an account of it, must condemn and despise her, for dishonouring her husband, and disgracing her sex. On the other hand, how amiable does the conduct of Joseph appear !

It was very natural for Potiphar to believe his wife's tale ; and considering the provocation which he supposed Joseph had given him, he shewed great lenity in only committing him to prison. For such a crime, Potiphar would have been justified in the eye of the world, had Joseph been condemned to death.

What a dreadful reverse of fortune did Joseph experience ! Instead of enjoying the friendship and confidence of a kind master, he was regarded as a monster of ingratitude. The fair character he had enjoyed in the world was blasted. Ease and plenty were exchanged for the horrors of a dungeon. His feet were hurt in the stocks ; and the iron of his cruel chains, rivetted by calumny, entered into his very *soul**.

How pleasing it is to read in the same chapter, that the LORD extended his kindness to the injured youth and lessened the evils of imprisonment ! As we are told that there was an interposition of Providence in his favour, we may conclude, that the LORD graciously inclined the heart of the keeper to believe the account which Joseph gave of himself ; and that the same behaviour which had before gained him the confidence of Potiphar, through the blessing of GOD, procured him that of his keeper.

Fortunate were those who were committed to Joseph's care ; and happy was he in the opportunities he had of exercising the benevolence of his heart, by comforting and doing good offices to his fellow prisoners !

Whether Potiphar was afterwards convinced of Jo-

* Psalm cv. 18.

seph's innocence or not, we are not told ; but as he was an officer of high rank, we may suppose that the keeper would otherwise have been fearful of giving such indulgence as he did, to a prisoner committed to strict confinement for such an atrocious offence against Potiphar himself.

From this section we learn, to ascribe prosperity in our worldly concerns to GOD. As the LORD was with Joseph, so may we hope He will be with every one who reposes a sincere trust in him, and conscientiously discharges the duties of his station. We also learn, in moral actions, to have a becoming reverence for the DEITY. If Joseph's reflection, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against GOD*, were allowed to have its due influence, it would be found an excellent preservative against a dissolute course of life ; for no one, who feels an inward esteem for GOD, will dare to violate his laws. Domestics may, from Joseph's example, derive encouragement to serve their masters with fidelity and uprightness. This is the most likely way to gain the good will and confidence of their employers ; and the certain way to obtain the favour of the LORD : persons in particular, who are unexpectedly reduced to a state of servitude, may from hence conceive hopes, that, by a steady course of integrity, they shall obtain esteem, and find their situation much more comfortable than could have been expected, nay, perhaps, rise to independence again. Masters may conclude, from this instance, that it is their interest to commit the management of their household affairs to persons of a religious turn of mind.

What an excellent lesson does this portion of Scripture afford to such youths as are exposed to the allurements of wanton women ! Happy would it be for thousands, should they take example from Joseph !

Persons

Persons who are injured by calumniators, are encouraged by this part of Sacred History, to submit with patience to such evils as their traducers may bring upon them : since they may rest assured of the mercy and favour of GOD, which will immediately alleviate their sufferings, and inspire them with hopes of a final deliverance.

SECTION XLVI.

THE DREAMS OF THE BUTLER AND BAKER.

From Genesis, Chap. xl.

AND it came to pass after these things, that Pharoah, king of Egypt, was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them, and they continued a season inward.

And they dreamed a dream, both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream : the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold they were sad. And he asked Pharoah's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day ?

And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God ? tell me them, I pray you.

And

And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said unto him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me : and in the vine were three branches : and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth ; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes.

And Pharoah's cup was in my hand : and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharoah's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharoah's hand.

And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it : the three branches are three days :

Yet within three days shall Pharoah lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place : and thou shalt deliver Pharoah's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me ; and make mention of me unto Pharoah, and bring me out of this house.

For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews : and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and behold I had three white baskets on my head.

And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of baked meats for Pharoah ; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof ; the three baskets are three days :

Yet within three days shall Pharoah lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharoah's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants ; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler, and of the chief baker, among his servants.

And

And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again : and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand :

But he hanged the chief baker ; as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The manner in which Joseph accosted his fellow-prisoners, Pharaoh's butler and baker, shews, that he felt a benevolent solicitude for their happiness. The dreams which they had were undoubtedly from God, sent, as we shall soon perceive, to answer particular purposes of Divine Providence, but chiefly to lead to the deliverance and advancement of Joseph.

The Egyptians were a very superstitious people, and dealt much with magicians, who pretended to the power of foretelling future events, and interpreting dreams ; and we may suppose, from the expression, *there is no interpreter*, that Pharaoh's officers wished for an opportunity of consulting one of those sages. Joseph's reply indicated that he did not believe human arts could enable any person whatever to interpret dreams : and he seems to have been suddenly inspired with a persuasion that God would make known to *him* the import of those which now disturbed the minds of the chief butler and baker.

Joseph's request, that the butler would recommend him to the clemency of Pharaoh, was not at all inconsistent with the most firm trust in God ; for he had no reason to expect miracles to be wrought in his favour, when his deliverance might be effected, under the Divine blessing, by human means.

It must have been a severe trial to Joseph to be ranked

with the vilest of mankind ; we therefore cannot wonder that he took every opportunity of attesting his innocence.

It is needless to observe that there was great ingratitude in the butler's forgetfulness of Joseph : particularly as he knew, by his own experience, both the horrors of imprisonment, and the joy of liberation.

The will of God is now so fully made known to Christians by the publication of the Scriptures, and these sacred volumes contain such a variety of examples and warnings, that we have seldom occasion for intimation by dreams, therefore it is best to pay no attention to the nocturnal ramblings of the mind ; for if, as Joseph observes, *interpretations are of God*, it must be very presumptuous in any *human being* to attempt to explain them : and should God see fit to affect our minds in an extraordinary manner, by a dream on any particular occasion, he will, doubtless, by the same instinctive power, direct us to the right understanding of it*.

SECTION XLVII.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

From Genesis, Chap. xli.

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed a dream, and his spirit was troubled ; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise-men thereof : and Pharaoh told them

* I will not take upon me absolutely to assert, that *all* dreams are *insignificant*, but in general they certainly are so ; and unless accompanied with an irresistible impulse, to do or avoid something which has a direct tendency to promote our own *good*, or that of others, we may be sure *it is not of God*. Every suggestion to *wickedness* is to be ascribed to the *evil one*, and as such should be resisted.

his

his dreams ; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker.

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he, we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard : and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams ; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was : me he restored unto my office, and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon ; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream and there is none that can interpret it : and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me ; God, shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold I stood upon the bank of the river. And behold, there came up out of the river, seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favoured ; and they fed in a meadow.

And behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine.

And when they had eaten them up, it could not be

known that they had eaten them ; but they were still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I slept and dreamed a second time.

And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good. And behold, seven ears, withered, thin and blasted with the east-wind, sprung up after them.

And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears : and I told this unto the magicians ; but there was none that could declare it unto me.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one : GOD hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

The seven good kine are seven years ; and the seven good ears are seven years ; the dream is one.

And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them, are seven years : and the seven empty ears blasted with the east-wind, shall be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh. What GOD is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine ; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt ? and the famine shall consume the land.

And the plenty shall not be known in the land, by reason of that famine following : for it shall be very grievous.

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh ; it is because the thing is established by GOD, and GOD will shortly bring it to pass.

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over

over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath paa-neah: and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt: and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field which was round about every city laid he up in the same.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering: for it was without number.

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came: which Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On, bare unto him.

And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

And the name of the second called he Ephraim: for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt were ended.

And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands: but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians: and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

And

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn ; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the early ages of the world, before mankind had much experience, or writing was invented, there were many particulars necessary to be known in order to ascertain the seasons in which different parts of the earth should be cultivated. It was very material in Egypt, for instance, to be prepared for the inundation of the river Nile, because the future harvest depended greatly upon it, and the people were obliged to remove to the highest ground whilst it lasted. This it is supposed first led the Egyptians to observe the motions of the stars, that they might know how the year passed by the appearance of the heavens, as the stars succeeded in regular order. There is one bright star called the Dog Star, which appears in Egypt, early in the morning, just before the time of the inundation ; this and a number of other circumstances attracted the particular attention of some among the antient Egyptians, and led to great discoveries in the science of astronomy, which was connected with their religion ; for the principal deities of this people were the Sun, Moon, and Dog Star, worshipped under a great variety of figures and emblems. The priests of these idols pretended to have immediate intercourse with the gods by means of certain magical arts which they practised ; these were the magicians, some of whom Pharaoh sent for to interpret his dreams ; their failing to do so proved that they were false prophets.

Pharaoh's butler seems to have recollected his promise

mise to Joseph with great compunction of mind. How much was his present kindness invalidated by his former forgetfulness !

The dreams of Pharaoh were such, that the art of man could not investigate them ; yet without these dreams Pharaoh would not have been induced to send for Joseph ; neither would he have known a truth of great importance in a country where superstition prevailed, *that interpretations come from God*. We may add, that in all probability Pharaoh in the years of plenty would have neglected to gather the corn into store-houses ; or the people might have been remiss in sowing grain, after a few years of such astonishing abundance ; the consequences of which would have been fatal to thousands. Or they might have supposed the plenty and famine to have been the effects of mere natural causes, instead of looking up to God as the author of them.

Joseph's advice, though perfectly agreeable to *reason*, proceeded from *Divine revelation*. A man like him, remarkable for humility, and just released from a prison, would scarcely have ventured to offer his own sentiments so freely to an august monarch. A fifth part of the corn was afterwards found adequate to the deficiencies of the years of famine ; for it is to be considered, that, besides the king's stores, the rich people of the land had it in their power, during the years of plenty, to lay by great quantities, after having supplied their quota to government ; and we may suppose that the earth itself, even while the dearth lasted, yielded a small quantity.

Though Pharaoh had very erroneous notions respecting religion, in consequence of his having been educated in that of the Egyptians, he still believed in the
LORD

LORD GOD, and was ready to obey his commands as soon as they were made known to him, by one who, he was convinced, spake by the inspiration of the SPIRIT OF GOD ; his determination to follow Joseph's counsel was perfectly consistent with a stedfast belief in GOD; and the honours he heaped on him shewed a firm trust in the Divine promises. The name which was given to Joseph by Pharaoh signifies a *prime minister*. Without imputing ambition to Joseph, we may account for his accepting this post by supposing, that in so doing he followed a Divine impulse.

The knowledge of the true GOD was not totally lost among the Egyptians at this time ; but in what manner they paid their adorations to the SUPREME BEING we do not know : it is supposed that they made use of *symbols* to express his *attributes*. Even this was a great corruption of the religion of Noah ; but not so bad as what they were afterwards guilty of, in setting up *imaginary deities*, in competition with the LORD. Had Potipherah been an idolator of the last description, we have reason to think no temptation would have prevailed on Joseph to form an alliance with him ; and it will be shewn in a following Section, that Joseph did not entirely conform to the customs of the Egyptians : therefore we may conclude, that he practised the religion of his fathers, as much as it was in his power to do in a foreign land. We are told that "the Lord was with Joseph," which would scarcely have been the case if he had forsaken the Lord.

Joseph soon, by his great activity, convinced Pharaoh, that in appointing him as prime minister he had made a judicious choice.

How merciful was GOD in so ordering events that abundance should precede scarcity!

While Joseph continued in prison, he recollected, with regret, the comforts of his father's house ; but his exaltation was now so great, and his means of doing good so enlarged, that he thought it his duty to settle his mind entirely to his present situation. Pharaoh appears to have continued very stedfast in his attachment to Joseph. What dreadful situation would he and his people have been in, had not the LORD so wonderfully interposed for their relief !

In this Section we have a fresh instance to warn us against human attempts to interpret dreams. In former ages, as we learn from this and other passages of Scripture, GOD sometimes gave intimation to kings of particular nations concerning future events, in which they and their people were concerned. But in general dreams do not admit of any interpretation at all, because they are the mere sports of fancy, or rather the *remnants of ideas*, which have before passed in the mind.

Kings are instructed by this portion of Scripture to seek out as ministers, men not only "*discreet and wise,*" but those "*in whom the SPIRIT OF GOD is;*" or persons who regulate their lives, in all the relative duties, by the revealed will of GOD. From the example of Joseph, Ministers may learn, that they should, in the management of public affairs, consult the welfare of both king and people, and establish such laws as may give their country consequence with other nations. The Subjects of a kingdom are led from this portion of Scripture, to consider it as an interposition of Providence in their favour when they have righteous rulers ; and private persons are admonished, in the time of affliction, to place their trust and confidence in GOD, who can so order events, as by a happy reverse
of

of fortune to make them forget all their former sorrows, and bless them with prosperity in the height of their affliction.

SECTION XLVIII.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

From Genesis, Chap. xlii.

Now when Jacob knew that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another ?

And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt ; get ye down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die.

And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren : for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came : for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land : and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth.

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them ; and he said unto them, Whence come ye ? and they said, From the land of Canaan, to buy food.

And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he

dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies ; to see the nakedness of the land you are come.

And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons ; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land you are come.

And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan ; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies.

Hereby he shall be proved ; by the life of Pharaoh, ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you ; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies.

And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live for I fear God.

If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison ; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses ; But bring your youngest brother unto me ; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.

And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ; and ye would

would not hear? therefore behold also his blood is required.

And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

And he turned himself about from them, and wept: and returned to them again, and communed with them and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack: and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money: for behold it was in his sack's mouth.

And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored: and lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

And they came unto Jacob their father, unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befel unto them, saying.

The man who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies.

We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men: leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone.

And bring your youngest brother unto me; then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men;

men; so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land.

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that behold every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money they were afraid.

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand and I will bring him to thee again.

And he said, My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In times of public calamity, the minds of men are frequently struck with a kind of consternation that prevents their making any exertions for their own relief: This seems to have been the case with Jacob's sons. "The famine was sore in the land," the labours of the husbandman were ineffectual, the LORD had withdrawn his blessing, and the wretched inhabitants of Canaan were in danger of perishing, for want of sustenance. Utterly at a loss for expedients in this dreadful emergency, Joseph's brethren "looked on each other" with fearful expectation, not knowing which of them would first feel the dire effects of this afflicting evil.

It appears that Jacob indulged the same kind of partiality for Benjamin, as he formerly did for Joseph; but

but there is this excuse to be made for him, that his other sons were in a manner separated from him, having families of their own, while Benjamin was his constant companion.

The land of Egypt was extremely well fortified by nature, and in danger of incursions only in that quarter which lay nearest to Canaan. Joseph had therefore a very good pretence for challenging his brethren as *spies*. His words may be construed as a sort of interrogation, *Are ye not spies?* The answer which they made, furnished a very good reason why they should not be regarded as such; for it was scarcely probable, that a man would send so many of his own sons on so dangerous an expedition; or that the brethren of one family should undertake it, without other associates.

Joseph's expression, *By the life of Pharaoh*, is not to be considered as an *oath*, but as a vehement asseveration, signifying, *As surely as Pharaoh lives*. We should reflect that the occasion was sudden; and that his mind was violently agitated.

As the governor of Egypt, Joseph was in a very critical situation. He had great reason to suspect that his brethren had not told him the truth in regard to Benjamin; and supposing that they had murdered him, it would have been a flagrant act of injustice had he let them escape unpunished; but though Joseph committed his brethren to prison, there is no account of any cruelties inflicted on them during their confinement. It would have been very wrong had he owned them at once; for had they proved as wickedly inclined as formerly, he could not, for his reputation's sake, have continued his protection to them, or lived on the terms of brotherly love.

It was very natural that Joseph should feel a particular affection for Benjamin, as he was the son of his
own

own mother, and therefore more nearly related to him than the rest of his brethren; besides, most of the others were much older than himself, and they had, all the time he lived among them, regarded him with a jealous eye, and treated him unkindly; so that he must have had uncommon goodness of heart to have felt so much tenderness for them, as his subsequent behaviour displays.

We have reason to suppose that, after mature deliberation, Joseph resolved to keep one only of his brothers as an hostage, and leave the event to Providence. Had his brethren been at liberty, three days at least would have been necessary to rest themselves, and their cattle, and transact their business; so that Jacob, and that part of his family who remained with him in Canaan, did not suffer by their detention.

In the confession which they made to each other, we may perceive the natural effects of wicked actions, those reproaches of conscience which are ever ready to torment the guilty. It must have been a great consolation to Reuben, at this time, to think, that *he* had endeavoured to prevent what the others now so justly deplored.

It is evident, from Joseph's emotion, that he did not take these measures from motives of cruelty or revenge. We may suppose, from his choice of Simeon, that he regarded him as the chief instigator to the cruelties which had been exercised on himself; therefore most likely to be guilty in respect to Benjamin. The Jews have a tradition, that as soon as the others were gone, Simeon was released from his fetters, and treated with the utmost lenity.

Joseph's returning the purchase-money may be imputed to two reasons; a desire of proving the integrity of his brethren; and a willingness to relieve gratuitously

tously the necessities of his relations. What is in this Section called an *inn*, signifies a tent, which they carried about to pitch occasionally; for there were no public inns in those days in the eastern countries.

By this section, we are instructed, that in times of dearth and scarcity, the inhabitants of a country should not sit down in supine dejection, "looking at one another;" but make diligent inquiry, whether it be not possible to procure a supply from some foreign land. It also contains a powerful warning to all persons against the perpetration of wicked actions; since, however secretly committed, they leave a sting in the conscience; and, when known, bring suspicion upon the authors of them, in cases in which they are perfectly blameless.

SECTION XLIX.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

From Genesis, Chap. xliii.

AND the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass when Jacob's family had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

And

And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother ?

And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive ? have ye another brother ? and we told him according to the tenor of these words : could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down ?

And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go : that we may live and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.

I will be surety for him : of my hand shalt thou require him ; if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this ; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds ; and take double money in your hand : and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand ; peradventure it was an oversight.

Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man ; and GOD ALMIGHTY give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin ; if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin ; and rose up, and went down down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said
to

to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready ; for these men shall dine with me at noon.

And the man did as Joseph bade ; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house ; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in ; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, and said,

O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food, and it came to pass when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and behold every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight ; and we have brought it again in our hand.

And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food ; we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

And he said, Peace be to you, fear not ; your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks : I had your money ; and he brought Simeon out unto them.

And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet ; and he gave their asses provender.

And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon ; for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the
present

present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?

And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive: and they bowed down their heads and made obeisance.

And he lift up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? and he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves; and for the Egyptians which did eat with him by themselves; because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews: for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

And they sat before him, the first born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth; and the men marvelled one at another.

And he took and sent messes unto them from before him; but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is an appearance of undutifulness in Judah's refusal to go down into Egypt at his father's command;

mand ; but we should consider the situation he was in. Jacob felt the force of his son's remonstrances, and was convinced that Judah insisted upon Benjamin's accompanying him, not from a principle of disobedience, but from prudence and necessity. The present which he sent consisted of the choicest produce of the land of Canaan.

Though Jacob at first had suffered his affection for one child to make him unmindful of what was due to the rest of his family, he soon recollected his duty, and resigned his affairs to the disposal of Divine Providence.

It is evident that Joseph's detention of Simeon proceeded from a distrust that he had dealt treacherously with his youngest brother ; for as soon as he was convinced that Benjamin was safe, he found it difficult to restrain the effusions of his tenderness towards all of them. With what anxious solicitude did he inquire after his aged parent ! With what affection did he behold his mother's son ! Not one unkind or harsh expression did he utter, but entertained his brethren with the utmost hospitality. Prudence suggested that a farther trial of them was necessary, before he placed confidence in them, therefore he refrained himself, but the pain which it cost him to do so the sacred historian has most pathetically expressed. Well might Joseph's brethren, a company of shepherds, be astonished, at being treated with so much ceremony and respect in the palace of a Prime Minister ! How condescending and engaging must Joseph's behaviour have been, which encouraged his brethren, under such circumstances, to *be merry with him*.

It is likely that the Egyptians possessed that illiberal spirit which prevails too much among the lower kinds
of

of Englishmen, of regarding foreigners as persons of an inferior species to themselves; and that this was the ground of that abomination in which they held the Hebrews; or it might be on account of the difference of Religion between them.

The manner of eating among the ancients, was, to have a number of small dishes set before the master of the feast, who distributed to each guest his portion. A *double* mess was the usual mark of distinction.

From this section, we learn, that it is adviseable, in extraordinary cases, for parents to comply with the remonstrances of their children, if the latter have had experience in the world, rather than to insist upon an implicit obedience in matters where their affections may lead them wrong. Before a father or mother determine to follow their own opinion in favour of one child, they should carefully consider whether their doing so will be consistent with their duty to the rest.

Whenever the interests of persons who have an equal claim to consideration seem to interfere, it is the best way for heads of families to imitate Jacob's example, and pursue the measure which present exigencies require, for the good of the *whole*, leaving the care of *individuals* to Divine Providence.

SECTION L.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

From Genesis, Chap. xlv.

AND Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth;

mouth; and put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn-money : and he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

Is not this it in which my lord drinketh? and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing.

Behold, the money which we found in our sack's mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan : how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words : he with whom it is found shall be my servant : and ye shall be blameless.

Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest : and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and they returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house (for he was yet there), and they fell before him on the ground.

And

And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done ? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine ?

And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord ? what shall we speak ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants : behold, we are my lord's servants : both we, and he also, with whom the cup is found.

And he said, God forbid that I should do so ; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant ; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant : for thou art even as Pharaoh.

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother ? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one : and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father : for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down : if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down ; for we
may

may not see the man's face except our younger brother be with us.

And thy servant, my father, said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely, he is torn to pieces; and I saw him not since:

And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us, (seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;)

It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bond-man to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me: and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? and his brethren could not answer him: for they were troubled at his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you ; and they came near : and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

For these two years hath the famine been in the land : and yet there are five years in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God ; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt : come down unto me, tarry not.

And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

And there will I nourish thee ; (for yet there are five years of famine ;) lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen ; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept ; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them : and after that his brethren talked with him.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Joseph had formed a plan for the benefit of his relations, and could not by any other means obtain intelligence, whether his brethren were deserving of his intended kindness, he was perfectly justified in making the experiments he did. The circumstance he particularly wanted to know, was whether they really loved Benjamin, and would protect him at all events. It must doubtless have given him the greatest degree of satisfaction to find, that they not only repented of their crime towards himself, but were strictly just in their mercantile concerns, and tenderly attached to each other.

Joseph's question, *Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?* is not to be understood as if he practised magical arts, or was constantly inspired: it is rather a proof that he was liable to human infirmities, which led him to make use of this artifice, in order to intimidate his brethren. It may be observed by the by, that this was not consistent with Joseph's usual wisdom, because his charging them with a theft which they had not committed, shewed his brethren, that, in one instance at least, his divination was false.

Judah was at a loss what reply to make. He might justly have pleaded, that there was artifice in the whole transaction from beginning to end, but having no advocate to support his cause, he was afraid to do this. He therefore in ambiguous terms acknowledged the consciousness of guilt, which oppressed the minds of himself and his brethren, and the conviction accompanying it, that their affliction was from God.

What a pathetic scene now ensued, and how powerfully did Judah plead! Never was a tale related with more pathetic eloquence than this! No wonder that Joseph, whose heart was agitated with the tenderest emotions,

emotions, could no longer refrain himself! Who but a sacred penman, inspired to describe the workings of nature, by Him to whom all hearts are open, could have conveyed to the world such a lively representation of this memorable event?

Having tried his brethren as much as was necessary for their justification, and his own satisfaction, Joseph nobly and piously resolved to make them amends for the sufferings he had inflicted, by freely forgiving the personal injuries he had received from them: and henceforth to consider what had happened as a dispensation of Providence, to which his brothers had been instrumental. Nothing could be more generous than his kind endeavours to quiet their consciences: for though God in his infinite mercy over-ruled their designs, their cruelty towards him was the result of their own wicked inclinations; they were actuated by human passions, not compelled by divine power.

What happiness must Joseph have enjoyed in the power of removing his father from a state of famine, to ease and affluence! and how great must have been the felicity of all parties at this perfect restoration of family harmony!

This portion of Scripture affords a striking picture of filial affection and duty. Judah was more concerned for his father's happiness than for his own safety: Joseph could no longer refrain from discovering himself, when he knew the painful uncertainty that Jacob endured. In this respect both Judah and Joseph are worthy of imitation: for those who have, with anxious care, reared a family, have an undoubted right to the tenderest regards of every individual of it. Old age is subject to many infirmities; and it should be the study of every child not to add to the sufferings of their aged parents, but to lessen them as much as possible. How
dreadful

dreadful is the idea of “ bringing down the gray hairs of a parent with sorrow to the grave !”

Fraternal affection is also strongly enforced by the examples of Judah and Joseph. In the first, we behold an elder brother acting as the guardian and protector of a younger one. In the other, a forgiveness of injuries, and a participation of benefits, with a fervent desire to increase the happiness of an honoured parent, and promote the general prosperity of the family.

A useful lesson of *worldly prudence* is likewise conveyed in this portion of Scripture ; namely, that it is the *interest* of brethren to live in friendship and harmony, as the success of the one may lead to the advantage of all. Happy would it be, if these considerations were allowed their due weight with all christians !

SECTION LI.

DEPARTURE OF JOSEPH'S BRETHREN.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY SETTLE IN EGYPT.

From Genesis, Chap. xlv. xlv. and xlvii.

AND it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come : and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye : lade your beasts, and go get ye into the land of Canaan ;

And take your father, and your households, and come unto me : and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat of the fat of the land.

Now thou art commanded, this do ye ; take you waggons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

Also regard not your stuff, for the good of all the

land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so : and Joseph gave them waggons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment : but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

And to his father he sent after this manner ; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt ; and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed : and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan, unto Jacob their father,

And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them : and when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

And Israel said, It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die.

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob ; and he said, Here am I.

And he said, I am God, the God of thy father ; fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation.

I will go down with thee into Egypt : and I will also surely bring thee up again : and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

And

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the waggons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

And they took their cattle, and their goods which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him.

His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed, brought he with him into Egypt.

All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, besides Jacob's sons wives, were threescore and six: And the sons of Joseph which were born to him in Egypt, were two souls. In all threescore and ten*.

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen: and they came into the land of Goshen.

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him: and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me:

And the men are shepherds; for their trade hath been to feed cattle: and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

And it shall come to pass when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation!

That ye shall say, Thy servants trade hath been about

* Reckoning Jacob himself, and Joseph.

cattle, from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen: for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father, and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan: and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.

And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? and they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.

They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father, and thy brethren, are come unto thee:

The land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity amongst them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

And

And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

And Joseph nourished his father and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The immediate attention which Pharaoh, king of Egypt, paid to Joseph's brethren, shows the high esteem he had for him; and the ready concurrence of his officers proves, that Joseph had executed the trust reposed in him, so as to gain their good opinion.

Pharaoh, on this occasion, displayed a truly royal munificence, and an earnest desire to do honour to a man, who deserved so well of his king and country.

Not content with dispensing the gifts of Pharaoh, Joseph added others of his own, as testimonies of dutiful respect to his father, and of affection to all his brethren. There was a very good reason for his distinguishing Benjamin above the rest, as has been already observed.

The admonition which Joseph gave to his brethren, *not to fall out by the way*, was spoken, as it seems, in kindness, not by way of reproach. A quarrel would most likely have occasioned their separation, in which case, his benevolent designs, which included *all*, would have been frustrated.

How affecting it is to read the account which is here given of the return of Jacob's sons!

It is likely that the good old patriarch had promised himself the comfort of ending his days in the Land of Canaan; and at his time of life, a change of situation must have been very disagreeable to him; however,

parental affection overcame all his objections to a removal.

Jacob does not seem to have had any particular pleasure in reflecting on Joseph's exaltation and riches; it was enough for this affectionate father, that his long lost son was yet alive. He had no wish so great as that of beholding him once more before he died.

It was by the express command of GOD, that Jacob fixed his abode in Canaan; and we may suppose that he was acquainted with the prediction spoken by the LORD to Abraham. *Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years**. So that when he was required to move with all his family into Egypt, it was natural for him to have dread and apprehensions. The present situation of his affairs was critical; and however indifferent it might be to him individually, in what part of the world he should reside, for the short remainder of his days, as *Heir of the Promises*, it was of material consequence to obtain direction from GOD: with this view we may suppose, as well as to testify his gratitude, the patriarch offered sacrifices at Beer-sheba, which was in the way to Egypt, and on the utmost borders of Canaan to the south.

It must have been a great consolation to Jacob to have had his fears quieted by a Divine Promise, before he took his last farewell of that country in which he was born, and on which his hopes respecting the future prosperity of his family were fixed.

With what beautiful simplicity has the sacred historian described the interview between Joseph and his father! It evidently appears, that neither grandeur nor riches had any charms for Jacob; all the affections of his soul were at that instant collected together in the fulness of paternal love. He felt in that happy mo-

* Gen. xv. 13.

ment, consolation for years of sorrow, the height of human felicity ; and was contented to resign his life, since he had attained the summit of his desires.

“ * The land of Goshen was situated in the eastern parts of Egypt, between the Red Sea and the river Nile, upon the borders of Canaan. It was a fruitful spot, every way fit for pasturage. This country was separated from Egypt, and on this account particularly desirable to the Israelites, as they might keep themselves in a body without endangering their religion or manners, by mixing with the Egyptians, and without incurring the envy or odium of the nation, as they would have done had they lived among them, and shared any power or profit in the government. They were also very conveniently fixed for returning into Canaan, whenever it should please God to command them to leave Egypt.

“ The Egyptians held shepherds in general in abhorrence, because they killed their gods, for the Egyptians worshipped *sheep* among a number of other idols ; and their aversion to shepherds was probably increased by the great oppression and tyranny they had endured from the Phœnician shepherds, who had before penetrated into their country, made great devastations, and for a considerable time kept possession of it.” But, upon whatever account it was that shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, we must consider it as a great instance of Joseph’s modesty and love of truth that he was not ashamed of an employment so mean in itself, and so vile in their eyes. It is observable, that he did not boast of his descent from *Abraham, a mighty prince*, or stile his father *Israel, a prince of God* : his pleasure and ambition were to shew forth the wonderful goodness of God, in bringing him from so low a condition in life to such power and grandeur.

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

The post to which Pharaoh appointed Joseph's brethren was an honourable one, in reference to the occupation which they had themselves made choice of.

In what terms Jacob pronounced a blessing on Pharaoh we are not told ; but we may conclude, that he expressed gratitude for the benefits conferred on himself and his family, and wished the king prosperity and happiness.

If we reflect on the various calamities which had befallen Jacob, since he first left his father's house, we may easily conceive why he said his days had been evil ; and he had not yet attained to the age of his progenitors.

It is remarkable, that in his answer to Pharaoh, Jacob called his life a *pilgrimage* ; and we find from several texts of Scripture*, that the patriarchs, and other good men, considered themselves as *strangers* and *sojourners upon earth*. This idea the Apostle to the Hebrews enlarges upon, and observes†, that those who confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims, plainly declared, that they sought a country, which, he observes, could not be that from whence they came out, because, to that they might have returned ; but they sought a *better*, even an *heavenly country*. It may be inferred, that Jacob's hopes were actually fixed upon an heavenly state, since he was not at all elated with the prosperity that smiled upon him, neither did he lament his leaving Canaan.

Joseph's happiness must have been very great, in seeing his venerable parent, and all his relations, so happily settled around him.

From Joseph's advice to his brethren, *see that ye fall not out by the way*, a very instructive lesson may be learnt. How frequently does it happen, that children of the same family disagree concerning the gifts or legacies bestowed by relations, if one among them has a larger portion than

* Ps. xxxix, 12.

† Heb. xi. 13, 14, &c.

the rest. These contentions are not likely to benefit any ; on the contrary, such animosities destroy that concord which is of greater value than much treasure ; and prevent the intercourse of good offices, which affords more substantial pleasures than riches can purchase.

The lesson may be extended farther ; for if Christians in general consider human life as a *pilgrimage*, surely it must appear the height of folly to fall out with their fellow-travellers by the way, about straws and pebbles ; when they are journeying towards a country where treasures of inestimable value will be bestowed on each of them, if they love one another, and live in other respects as their Heavenly Father requires.

SECTION LII.

THE EGYPTIANS SELL THEMSELVES TO PHARAOH.

From Genesis, Chap. xlvii.

AND there was no bread in all the land ; for the famine was very sore ; so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought : and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread ; for why should we die in thy presence ? for the money faileth.

And Joseph said, Give your cattle ; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

And they brought their cattle unto Joseph : and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses :

asses : and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle, for that year.

When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent, my lord also hath our herds of cattle ; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands.

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land : buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh : and give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land be not desolate.

And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh ; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them : so the land became Pharaoh's.

And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt, even to the other end thereof.

Only the land of the priests bought he not ; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them : wherefore they sold not their lands.

Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land, for Pharaoh : lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

And it shall come to pass in the increase, that you shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

And they said, Thou hast saved our lives : let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto

unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part ; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It evidently appears, that the famine in the land of Egypt was designed as a judgment on the *people*, not on the *king*, for while the former were reduced to slavery, the latter was raised to the highest pitch of affluence.

On a superficial view, Joseph seems to have had a partial regard for the king ; but we find that the people complied *willingly* with his requisition, and there is no doubt but that he did right, as he was in this matter guided by unerring wisdom. In respect to the cattle, they were a burden to the Egyptians, if they had no pasturage ; and the extremities of famine would have reduced the people to live entirely upon flesh, which would have been hurtful to their constitutions ; so that by giving them corn in exchange, Pharaoh certainly conferred an immediate benefit upon his subjects.

What is in this section called the *second* year, was, in reality, the last year of the famine. It is to be observed, that the Egyptians *voluntarily* offered to resign their lands, and sell themselves as slaves to Pharaoh ; and it will be found, that in making the purchase, he had their welfare in view. We may suppose, by Joseph's removing them from their usual abodes, that there were some irregularities among them that required a reform.

The priests of Egypt consisted of all the nobility of the land ; they filled the chief offices in the government, and it is likely that they had shewn a dutiful attachment to their sovereign, though they were idolaters ; on which account Pharaoh might be actuated by gratitude, as well as veneration, when he forbore to reduce them to a state of slavery.

It

It is apparent that Joseph had the good of the people at heart, as well as that of the king in the measures he pursued; for no sooner had the former submitted, as the exigencies of the state required, than he restored them their liberties, and allotted them a portion of land, with a right to cultivate it for their own advantage, reserving only a fifth part for the expences of government; a tax which so fertile a country as Egypt could very well bear; especially as it required but little trouble or charge to cultivate it. This measure appeared very reasonable to the Egyptians, who, sensible that they could not have managed so well for themselves, gratefully ascribed the preservation of their lives to their humane governor.

Joseph's conduct in the character of governor of Egypt, affords an excellent example to persons intrusted with the administration of public affairs. His situation was very critical, but the wisdom of his plans, and his equity in the execution of them, obtained him the esteem of all parties.

SECTION LIII.

THE DEATH OF JACOB.

From Genesis, Chap. xlvii. and xlviii.

AND Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.

But

But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place ; and he said, I will do as thou hast said.

And he said, Swear unto me ; and he sware unto him, And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick ; and he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

And one told Jacob, and said, Behold thy son Joseph cometh unto thee ; and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

And Jacob said unto Joseph, GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people ; and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession.

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine ; as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine.

And thy issue which thou shalt have after them shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath ; and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath, the same is Bethlehem.

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these ? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom GOD hath given me in this place ; and he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he
could

could not see well ; and Joseph brought them near unto him ; and Jacob kissed them, and embraced them.

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head ; guiding his hands wittingly ; for Manasseh was the first born.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac ; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him ; and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father ; for this is the first born ; put thy right hand upon his head.

And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it ; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great ; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh ; and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

And

And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die : but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword, and with my bow.

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob ; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my first-born ; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power ; unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.

Simeon and Levi are brethren : instruments of cruelty are in their habitations :

O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall.

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel ; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Judah thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies ; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Judah is a lion's whelp : from the prey, my son, thou art gone up ; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ?

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine ; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.

His

His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea ; and he shall be for a haven of ships : and his border shall be unto Zidon.

Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens.

And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant ; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel :

Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path ! that biteth the horse's-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Gad, a troop shall overcome him ; but he shall overcome at the last.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Naphtali is a hind let loose : he giveth goodly words.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well ; whose branches run over the wall :

The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him, and hated him.

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob ; from thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel ;

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the

the

the everlasting hills : they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Benjamin shall raven as a wolf : in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel : and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them ; every one according to his blessing, he blessed them.

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people ; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying place.

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Divine Promise made by the LORD to Jacob, that *he would be with him whithersoever he went*, was remarkably fulfilled in Egypt, in respect to the increase and prosperity of his family : but the good old patriarch's mind was fixed on Canaan, and his urgent desire to be buried there, may be considered as a proof of his belief in the Divine Promises. It was also a very prudent request to be interred in the cave of Machpelah, as it was calculated to answer the purpose of keeping up in the minds of his descendants, a wish and expectation of returning to Canaan at God's appointed time.

The

The expression *Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head*, seems to imply that he testified his veneration for the name of the LORD, by the greatest act of reverence his feeble state allowed him to use, while his son Joseph took the oath required of him.

Though Joseph had obtained such an uncommon share of riches and honours in Egypt, and doubtless had great possessions to bequeath to his children, he esteemed the *blessing of the LORD* as the most valuable portion they could enjoy; and with the view to obtain it for them, he took his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with him, when in consequence of the summons he had received, he went to attend his dying father.

If Jacob had not incorporated Joseph's sons into his own family, and bequeathed to their posterities an inheritance in the land of Canaan, disputes might afterwards have arisen between their descendants and those of Jacob's other sons: the latter would, in all probability, have considered the former as *Egyptians*. And Ephraim and Manasseh themselves might, from a predilection for their native country, have prejudiced their children in favour of it. Jacob appears to have cherished a tender remembrance of his dear wife Rachel; and he mentioned with seeming regret, that the circumstances he was in, when she died, prevented his burying her in the cave of Machpelah.

In the preference given to Ephraim, we have an additional proof of the foreknowledge of the SUPREME BEING; for, in pronouncing the blessing on Joseph's two sons, Jacob evidently spake by Divine inspiration. This blessing related only to the temporal state of their posterities.

Jacob himself was at this time in the very circumstances in which Isaac was, when he pronounced the paternal blessing on him, old and dim-sighted; the remembrance

membrance of his father's inadvertency, in all probability, made him particularly circumspect.

It is remarkable, that Jacob calls the GOD before whom his fathers walked, (and whom he had just before styled GOD ALMIGHTY) the ANGEL that redeemed him from all evil, and sustained him. By recollecting the various revelations that were made to this patriarch, we shall find, that he did not allude to any *created being*, but to the LORD Himself, who was the only visible author of his deliverance and sustenance. The portion which Jacob gave to Joseph, as his own particular bequest, was the field which he purchased of Hamor the father of Shechem. It is likely that the Amorites seized upon this when Jacob went to settle at Beth el; and that on account of the altar which he had erected there, he resolved to recover it out of their hands; and though no warrior, the patriarch might be enabled to succeed in this enterprize by the aid of the LORD.

We may suppose that all the sons of Jacob were present at the time the blessing was given upon Ephraim and Manasseh; for it was necessary that they should hear from their father's own mouth the LORD's will concerning Joseph's sons, otherwise they might have disputed their right to be considered as heads of tribes, or might have blended their posterities together, under the title of the tribe of Joseph.

The blessings Jacob pronounced when his sons surrounded his bed, were predictions concerning the future state of their posterities, which have been explained by their completion, as will be observed in a future part of the History of the Israelites. It is sufficient to observe at present, that Judah was to have the pre-eminence. By SHILOH is to be understood the *promised seed*; and we shall find that from the time of king David, who

who was of the tribe of Judah, was settled upon the throne, till the coming of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, Judah possessed some degree of pre-eminence over the rest of the Jewish nation.

The patriarch Abraham had several sons ; but one only received the promise of the inheritance of the land of Canaan. Isaac had two, but the youngest of them was sole heir of the promises. The numerous family of Jacob promised a great increase ; and it was the Divine will that they should incorporate together, and form one people under the denomination of Israelites ; the inheritance therefore was portioned out among them. The peculiar blessing respecting the *Everlasting Covenant* was the lot of Judah ; on which account he was to have the sovereignty. It will afford great satisfaction to observe the gradual accomplishment of these predictions.

There is something extremely edifying in Jacob's death. With the utmost composure did he expect his dissolution ; his soul seems to have been strengthened by the hopes of those blessings which are reserved *beyond the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills* for him, and all the nations of the earth, through the promised Redeemer. It is needless to descant on the character of this Patriarch ; every attentive reader may discover from the events of his life, that he was a man of like infirmities with the rest of human kind, but eminent for his faith and piety ; and, on account of these, supported under severe conflicts, sometimes by the visible appearance of the LORD, sometimes by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit. Let it be our earnest prayer, that we may be enabled to imitate this faithful servant of God in every perfection, and that the same LORD who redeemed him from all evil, and sustained him, may also⁷ save and support us in all dangers, spiritual and temporal.

SECTION

SECTION LIV.

THE FUNERAL OF JACOB.

From Genesis, Chap. 1.

AND Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father; and the physicians embalmed Israel.

And forty days were fulfilled for Jacob (for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed); and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, if now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt.

And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great

and very sore lamentation ; and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians : wherefore the name of it was called Abel mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them.

For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burying place, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

And they sent messengers unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin ; for they did unto thee evil : and now we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

And his brethren also went and fell down before his face : and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not ; for I am in the place of God :

But as for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Now

Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find, that Joseph, like a dutiful son, fulfilled the dying request of his honoured and lamented parent; and followed his dear remains with every circumstance of respect that affection could suggest, or his own princely rank require in the eye of the world. Embalming was an honour usually paid to the deceased in the land of Egypt; the manner of performing it is said to have been this: the bowels were taken out, washed, and secured from putrefaction by some powerful drugs, the whole body was anointed with oil of cedar, with myrrh, cinnamon, and other costly things, for about thirty days, by which means it was preserved entire, without so much as losing the hair; after this, it was put in salt of nitre forty days; lastly, the body was taken out of the salt, washed and curiously wrapped in linen dipped in myrrh, and rubbed with a certain gum that the Egyptians used instead of glue; then it was put into a coffin, on the upper part of which was represented the deceased person; it was also adorned with curious embellishments; the nearest relations usually kept these coffins in their houses. Bodies thus preserved are called mummies; and there are many remaining to this day, though the custom of embalming has long been discontinued.

As Joseph had engaged to carry his father to such a distance, it was very necessary he should use every precaution for preserving the body, because it would have been, before they arrived at the cave of Machpelah, in such a state of putrefaction, as would have endangered

the healths of the attendants on the funeral solemnity ; besides, it is necessary, in many instances, for foreigners to comply with the customs of a country they have long resided in.

It certainly must have been a painful office for Joseph and his brethren to follow their dear father's remains so many miles ; sometimes we may suppose them shedding tears of tender sorrow, for the loss of so affectionate a friend, recollecting a thousand instances of parental love ; sometimes contemplating his character in those instances which procured him the favour of God, and drawing comfort from the hopes, that he enjoyed this ineffable blessing in a superlative degree ; elevating their own souls with ardent wishes to obtain the same glorious reward, and forming resolutions to follow the example of their pious parent.

When they had performed the funeral rites, and deposited the body of Israel by the venerable remains of his honoured ancestors, Joseph returned, attended by his brethren, to the land of Egypt ; for he would neither break his promise to Pharaoh, nor desert the office to which he had been appointed, as the whole land of Egypt would have been thrown into confusion by his resignation, because there was not another person qualified to fill his place.

Notwithstanding the numberless instances which Joseph had given his brethren of his sincere affection and perfect forgiveness, they could not divest themselves of the fear that his resentment, which might have been restrained by respect for his father, would break out again : so hard is it for the guilty conscience to be at rest ! Their hearts told them what offences they had committed against their brother in his helpless youth ; and they well knew, that they had no title to his affection, but what was founded upon the goodness of his own disposition.

position. With what amiable tenderness did he receive their message, and afterwards assure them of his protection!

As Joseph acted towards his brethren, so should all people act towards their relations. If a brother or sister have offended, we should never suffer resentment to break out either in violent reproaches, or retaliation of injuries; but seek out occasions of recalling their love, by acts of kindness and friendship. Let us think how often we offend God, who bestows more benefits on us than we can possibly do on any creature. He forgives us; we should then forgive one another, more especially those who are nearly allied to us, and who have a natural claim to our affection.

SECTION LV.

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH.

From Genesis, Chap. l.

AND Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

And Joseph saw Ephraim's children, of the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

And Joseph said unto his father's house, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt; and all that generation died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joseph was about 56 years old when his father died ; and we find, that he lived a long time after this. It is presumed, that he continued to the last in the high post to which Pharaoh had appointed him. Whether any of his own brethren survived him we are not told. Before his death, his father's house had multiplied greatly ; and all the people of it, according to the usage of the times, were called his brethren.

When the hour of his death approached, Joseph had, by Divine inspiration, a certain assurance of the accomplishment of the predictions made known to him by Jacob, that the Israelites would be settled at a future time in Canaan ; and the command he gave concerning his remains, is reckoned by the Apostle to the Hebrews as a proof of his faith*. Many reasons might restrain Joseph from desiring to be interred immediately after his decease in Machpelah : it certainly was best, on all accounts, that Joseph's bones should continue with the Israelites, as a mean of strengthening and confirming their faith, in the LORD's promises respecting the land of Canaan, which it is plain Joseph himself firmly believed.

From the eventful history of this Patriarch, we may infer, that every situation in human life affords sufficient opportunities for the cultivation of virtuous habits, and the performance of good actions. We also learn the value of virtuous and religious principles early sown, and deeply rooted in the heart. From his father's house Joseph brought treasures, which, even in a state of slavery, he could call his own ; and which procured for

* Heb. xi. 22.

him what gold and silver could not have purchased, the favour of the LORD, and the esteem of mankind. We are likewise instructed, that the fear of God, and a serious regard to his authority, is the best preservative against criminal indulgencies ; that adversity often proves the means of exaltation ; that the proper use of power and riches is to employ them in promoting the general happiness of mankind, and of our relations in particular ; and that a stedfast reliance on Divine Providence will support the mind under the most afflicting evils that can possibly befall us.

SECTION LVI.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE ISRAELITES.—THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

From Exodus, Chap. i. and ii.

AND Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty ; and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we.

Come on, let us deal wisely with them ; lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

Therefore they did set over them task masters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses.

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. And they made their lives bitter, with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field : all their service wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born to the Hebrews, ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, whose name was Amram*, and took to wife a daughter of Levi, whose name was Jochebed†.

And the woman bare a son : and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein ; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

And his sister stood afar off, to wit what should be done to him.

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river : and her maidens walked along by the river's side : and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

And when she had opened it, she saw the child : and behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

* Exod. vi. 20.

† Ibid.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son, and she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The kings of Egypt were all called Pharaoh, though they had names besides: the monarch, in whose reign Moses was born, came from another country, and had conquered the Egyptians: this accounts for his paying no respect either to the memory of Joseph, or the lawful establishment which the children of Israel had obtained by a royal grant from a former monarch; nor can we wonder that this king should be jealous of a people, who multiplied and flourished in so remarkable a manner.

The original word here translated *task-masters*, properly signifies *tax-gatherers*; and the *burdens* are afterwards mentioned as distinct things, under another name: so that the resolution of council was, to lay heavy tributes upon the Israelites to impoverish, and heavy burdens to weaken them. Among other laborious works, it is supposed they were employed in building the famous Pyramids, in testimony of the splendor of the kings of Egypt, and as repositories for the dead bodies of those proud and cruel monarchs.

The *treasure cities*, mentioned in this section, are said to have been the places in which the kings of Egypt, agreeably to the custom introduced by Joseph, laid up

their stores of grain; but others conjecture that they were fortified cities.

What an inhuman wretch must Pharaoh have been, to command little innocent babes to be thrown into the river, unmindful of the pangs of their afflicted mothers!

The method which Jochebed employed to save her infant, proved, that she believed in the omnipotent power of God; for it was very unlikely that his life should be preserved in an ark of bulrushes; especially in a river filled by an inundation, which, perhaps, was at that time daily increasing, and of which the direful crocodile was an inhabitant. Scripture teaches us to regard Jochebed in this instance as an example of faith*; and we may conceive that we behold her—

“With invocations to the living God,
Twisting together every slender reed,
And with a separate prayer each osier weaving †.”

What her sensations were, when she consigned her dear babe to the watery element, let the fond mother imagine!

It must be regarded as an interposition of Providence, that Pharaoh's daughter should come to the place just at that juncture; and that she should commit the child to the care of his own mother. It was a great act of mercy in this princess to run such a hazard of incurring the displeasure of her cruel father, and the censure of the public; but *the babe wept*, and she could not resist the eloquence of its cries and tears: she kindly redeemed him from the waves, and resolved to nurture him as her own, though he was of a mean and ignoble birth, and sprung from a race of strangers despised by the Egyptians.

* Heb. xi. 23.

† Miss More's Sacred Dramas.

With what transporting delight must Jochebed have received her son to her arms, after the terrors she had suffered on his account! By being reared under her eye, Moses had the advantage of learning, from the dawn of reason, to worship the true God. The name which the princess gave to this her adopted son, signified *drawn out*. Moses was born in the year of the world 2434, and was about nine or ten years younger than his sister Miriam.

We are told in Scripture*, that Moses was afterwards educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Many arts and sciences are supposed to have been highly cultivated in Egypt at that period, particularly arithmetic, music, and hieroglyphics, otherwise called enigmatical philosophy. An ancient Jewish author† informs us, that Moses was instructed in all these; and another‡ says, that he was remarkable for the beauty of his person.

From the sufferings of the Israelites, related in this section, we may learn to be grateful to Divine Providence, for placing us in a land of freedom, under a mild government, where we have no tyranny to dread.

We may also learn, that no situation of life is so dangerous, but that the Divine power can effect a deliverance. In the present state of the world, mothers are not under the hard necessity of exposing their infants, like Jochebed; but so numerous are the perils of childhood, that, without a firm trust in God, the lives of parents must be a state of unremitting apprehension; they should therefore fortify their minds with the comfortable persuasion, that God is the parent of their offspring; that He constantly watches over children with tender love, and guards them from numberless unseen dangers, which

* Acts vii. 28.

† Philo.

‡ Josephus.

the utmost vigilance cannot prevent. Let then the Christian parent, when she presses her little darling to her bosom, suppress the too anxious apprehension, with the remembrance, that the LORD has already redeemed her babe, and adopted it as his own child in the Christian Covenant; and let her lift up her heart with thankfulness to GOD, that she is permitted and encouraged to perform the maternal duties with delight and tranquillity.

Pharaoh's daughter, though a *heathen*, set an example, worthy of the imitation of Christian ladies. May it excite them to use their utmost endeavours to rescue from destruction and ignorance those poor babes, who, from the distressful circumstances of their parents, are exposed to a fate as unhappy as that which threatened Moses. However mean and ignoble their birth, none are beneath the notice and compassion of the highest of their species; and the present day affords a most favourable opportunity of exercising their benevolence to the greatest advantage, in ways unknown to former ages*.

SECTION LVII.

MOSES FLEETH FROM EGYPT.

From Exodus, Chap. ii.

AND it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he espied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to

* We allude here to the plans of the Ladies Society for bettering the condition of the poor.

him

him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known?

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day?

And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.

And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom! for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Moses, as we learn from Scripture, continued to live in Pharaoh's court, till he was full forty years old*.

* Acts vii. 23.

He had not lost the prepossession which he had imbibed from his parents in favour of the Israelites; it grieved him to behold their sufferings, and he seems to have been inspired by the LORD with a persuasion that he should be the instrument of their deliverance; in consequence of which, perhaps he formed a resolution to relinquish all the honours and pleasures that attended him as the adopted son of the king's daughter, and to partake of their affliction*, not doubting but that God would accomplish those Divine promises which had been made to his forefathers. Moses was very sensible that he should expose himself to reproach, by thus testifying his faith in deliverance by the LORD, but he esteemed these reproaches as more valuable to him than all the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the *eternal* reward of his fidelity. When Moses took upon himself to avenge one of his countrymen, who was cruelly treated by an Egyptian, he might hope that the Israelites would confederate together†, in order to support his views; but cruel bondage had subdued their spirits, and he looked around him in vain for auxiliaries. To preserve himself therefore from the rage of the Egyptians he buried the body of the man whom he had slain, and suspended his purpose. When Moses shewed himself again the next day, instead of giving him thanks for his zeal, his brethren reproached him. No wonder that his courage should now fail him, for what could he do singly against the Egyptians? and to what end should he hazard his life in favour of those who disdained his friendship? Egypt was no longer a place of safety and comfort for him, therefore the most prudent step he could take was to flee away from it: not that he

* Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26.

† Acts vii. 25.

feared the wrath of the king, so as to apprehend he could frustrate the promises made to the patriarchs, but having as yet received no express directions from God, it would have been rashness to have proceeded farther than he had already done in defence of his countrymen.

The Midianites were descendants of Midian, one of the sons of Abraham, and from Moses' fleeing to them, and making an alliance in the family of their priest, we may conjecture, that the true God still continued to be adored in Midian. Idolatry (as we may suppose), like other human inventions, was *progressive*, and it is likely the first corruptions consisted in worshipping the SUPREME BEING Himself, with superstitious rites, representing his attributes by symbols, instead of honouring the LORD as GOD. These symbols being frequently misunderstood, gradually led to the belief of a plurality of gods.

It is to be remarked, that inspired authors do not relate all the passages of a story, but only such as are most material; we may therefore imagine, that a great many things intervened between Moses' entrance into the family of Reuel, and marrying his daughter.

As it can scarcely be thought, that a person educated like Moses, should be contented with the simple occupation of a shepherd; it is no improbable conjecture, that he filled up some of his time in writing; and that it was at this period he composed the Book of Job, and the Book of Genesis; both of which were calculated to comfort the Israelites, in the trials to which they were afterwards exposed.

To justify Moses from the imputation of murder, it may be proper to observe, that the Egyptians were cruel and unjust oppressors, and that the Israelites had no means of legal redress; under these circumstances,
therefore,

therefore, Moses might, surely, without committing sin, put an Egyptian to death, if he had no other way of preserving the life of one of his brethren.

From the example of Moses we should learn to despise all wordly riches and honours, when they cannot be enjoyed without giving up our title to the Divine promises; we are also instructed to consult the ease and interests of others in preference to our own selfish gratification. “ * The man who discovers, by the whole course of his actions, that he lives for himself alone, is always beheld with contempt; while he who cheerfully foregoes his own private advantage, to procure more important benefits for others, is an object of general esteem and admiration. Where the benevolent principle is predominant, it will dictate a thousand acts of kindness, which would never have fallen in the way of the selfish man; it will point out innumerable opportunities of obliging and serving others in the common incidents of life, and will make the sincere Christian as industrious in seeking, and as ready to embrace such opportunities, as the vainest person can be to display his services before the world in the more splendid scenes of public action.”

SECTION LVIII.

GOD APPEARETH TO MOSES—SENDETH HIM AND HIS BROTHER AARON TO PHARAOH.

From Exodus, Chap. ii. iii. iv.

AND it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried; and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

* Dr. Enfield's Sermon on the Character of Moses.

And

And GOD heard their groaning, and GOD remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

And GOD looked upon the children of Israel, and GOD had respect unto them.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of GOD: even to Horeb.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, GOD called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the GOD of thy father, the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob. And Moses hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon GOD.

And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows.

And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Now

Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me ; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt,

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt ?

And he said, Certainly I will be with thee ; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee : When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your father hath sent me unto you ; and they shall say to me, What is his name ; what shall I say unto them ?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM : and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you ; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.

And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the

the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

And they shall hearken to thy voice : and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD GOD of the Hebrews hath met with us ; and now let us go (we beseech thee) three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our GOD.

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof ; and after that he will let you go.

And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians : and it shall come to pass, that when ye go, ye shall not go empty.

But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment : and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

And Moses answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice : for they will say, the LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand ? and he said, A rod.

And he said, Cast it on the ground : and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent : and Moses fled from before it.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail : and he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.

That they may believe that the LORD GOD of their fathers, the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

And

And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom; and he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again; and he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom; and behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river, shall become blood upon the dry land.

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind: have not I the LORD?

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

And he said, O my LORD, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth:

mouth : and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people : and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the king who had so cruelly reduced the Israelites to a state of bondage, died, we find they met with no redress ; no alleviation of their misery : They had now suffered affliction for a great number of years, and were on the brink of despair. We are not told for what cause God permitted them to be so oppressed, but from the usual course of the Divine dispensations we may judge that as a people they had fallen off from their duty, so as not to consider the LORD as their only God, or worship him agreeably to his Divine appointment : It appears, however, that in their distress they cried unto the God of their fathers, who, of his grace and favour, resolved to pardon their offences, and effect their deliverance, in remembrance of his promise to his faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses continued forty years in Midian, with Reuel, or Jethro, his father-in-law, and seems to have laid aside all thoughts of returning into Egypt.

Mount Horeb was so near to Mount Sinai, that they appeared

appeared to be different tops of the same mountain. It was usual for shepherds to travel from place to place, with their flocks and herds, as the want of pasture directed. Horeb is called by Moses, *the mount of God*, and, in all probability, in his time, it was known by that name, on account of the LORD's having sanctified it on this occasion ; but there is no passage of Scripture that indicates its having been so distinguished in former times.

There had not for many years been an open vision of the DEITY ; but as the LORD was about to call his people to Himself, and to deliver them out of Egypt, by the hand of Moses, He vouchsafed to appear, in order to appoint him His minister.

No wonder that so uncommon a sight as a bush burning with fire, without consuming, should strike Moses with astonishment. He was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Yet could he not, from any principles of nature with which he was acquainted, account for so extraordinary a circumstance. This was among the things which Divine Revelation only could explain, for it was above the reach of human reason, and Moses might have spent his whole life in fruitless efforts, to explore the cause of this wonderful phenomenon ; but no sooner did he discover a desire to know the meaning of it, than the LORD satisfied his wishes by assuring him that it was a token of his immediate presence.

We are told that the *Angel of the LORD* appeared, &c. I have before observed, that this expression is but another title of the Deity, synonymous to that of the *Image of God*. Had the glorious Being, who addressed Moses, been a *created angel*, he would not have said *I am the God*, &c. nor would he in his own name have promised

mised to deliver Israel, or threatened to bring destruction on Egypt.

Strictly speaking, none but the SUPREME BEING Himself is *holy* ; therefore, what are in Scripture called *holy things*, are only so, as being sanctified by, or dedicated to Him. In this sense the ground whereon Moses stood was holy ; and it is supposed, that putting off the shoes was a mark of reverence that had been practised by the patriarchs when they were made sensible of the presence of the LORD.

Moses, finding himself in the immediate presence of GOD, was struck with the profoundest awe. Humbled by a sense of his own imperfections, which this wonderful vision was calculated to inspire, he wanted courage to undertake what the LORD required of him ; on which GOD promised to give him supernatural assistance. This certainly should have satisfied Moses, but his faith, on this important occasion, wanted the strongest support. He foresaw all the obstacles that were in the way of his mission. He knew that idolatry prevailed in Egypt, and that he should appear as a stranger to the Israelites after so long an absence ; he therefore entreated to know by what name he should call the LORD, to distinguish him from heathen gods.

The title, which the Divine Being appropriated, could belong to none but the one SUPREME GOD*, “ the BEING OF BEINGS, who giveth being to, and exerciseth authority over all things in the universe. This title properly considered suggests the following ideas of GOD : viz. that He is *one Being*, existing in and of Himself ; not receiving any thing from, nor depending upon, any other. That He is a *pure and simple Being*,

* Bishop Beveridge's Sermons.

without any mixture or composition ; and therefore we must not conceive of Him as made up of several parts, faculties or ingredients, but only of ONE, *who is that He is*, and whatsoever is in Him is HIMSELF ; and though we read of several faculties or properties attributed to Him in Scripture, as *wisdom, goodness, justice, &c.* we must not apprehend them to be several *powers, habits, or qualities*, as they are in us ; for as they are in GOD, they are neither distinguished from one another, nor from His nature and Essence in whom they are said to be ; for, to speak properly, they are not *in* Him, but are His very essence or nature itself*.”

The glorious title, I AM, is suitable to the Deity as the universal GOD of the whole creation : but it was His will to be distinguished to the *Israelites* by an additional one, “*The GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,*” in reference to the covenant made with those patriarchs concerning the *Promised seed* ; by this name He is still known, and will ever continue to be remembered, as long as the world lasts.

It pleased GOD to direct Moses in what manner to open his mission ; not at first to all the people, but to the heads of families. This was certainly consistent with prudence and policy ; for it was better that each of these should make the important matter known to their wives and children at home, than that the whole multitude should be called together, as such a measure would have occasioned tumult, and furnished Pharaoh with a plausible pretence for increasing their oppression.

* Those, who wish for farther assistance in contemplating on the Deity, may read, with pleasure and advantage, “*An attempt to prove the Existence and absolute Perfection of the supreme, unoriginated Being, in a demonstrative Manner, by Hugh Hamillon, Dean of Armagh.*” Published at Dublin, in 1784.

If Moses had not been fully aware before hand of the obstinacy of Pharaoh, he would most likely have been discouraged afterwards from persevering in his application to him for leave to let Israel depart; and had not the Israelites been informed that the LORD would permit them to spoil the Egyptians, as in times of war, they might have objected to leaving Egypt, on account of the want of necessaries for the journey they were required to take.

The expostulation which GOD permitted Moses to make, shews that He did not overpower the natural faculties of his mind; for the excuses Moses offered were such as *reason* would naturally suggest; and GOD, kindly considering him as a *reasonable creature*, was not offended at his scruples, but vouchsafed to give him a sensible demonstration of his miraculous power.

Moses, finding no immediate improvement of his natural faculties, still doubted his ability to execute what was required of him. Not that he had any impediment of speech, but to manage such a business as he was to be employed in, seemed to require an *extraordinary* degree of eloquence. This the LORD assured Moses by an unanswerable argument he could endow him with, and promised to do so.

The unwillingness of Moses to go with the LORD's message after receiving these promises was certainly a sin, and justly kindled the anger of the LORD against him; but GOD graciously spared him, and for his farther encouragement, promised him an auxiliary in his brother Aaron, who was an eloquent man. Aaron however was to act in a subordinate capacity to Moses, and to receive the divine commands through him. The rod, which had been turned into a serpent, was to be the ensign of the honorable office to which Moses was appointed.

From this section much important instruction may be collected. In the first place it affords a striking proof of the *existence of God, and a certainty of a DIVINE IMAGE in the nature of the DEITY*. It also shews that the LORD is true to his promises; and that when his servants are dead, and their bodies mouldering in the dust, He is still *their* GOD; which, as our saviour Himself observed, affords a strong argument in favour of the doctrine of a future existence; "*for GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living;*" *all live unto him**.

We are likewise taught, that when we wish to study any thing that relates to the nature of the DEITY, we should do it with awe and reverence. It will be proper for us to keep in mind, that the great I AM is the very LORD GOD, in whom the DEITY visibly manifested Himself to the patriarchs.

We are farther instructed by this section how to use our reason in other matters of a religious nature. It appears from hence just and proper to examine the difficulties that lie in the way to our performance of any duty, and then to allow divine revelation to have its full weight; which, from the just arguments it affords in the written Word, is now a sufficient guide, and will, even in the common occurrences of life, calm our fears and satisfy our minds; for, when convinced that we act agreeably to the commands of our GREAT CREATOR, we may confidently hope for the aid of Divine Grace to strengthen us in the performance of our duty. It is observable, that the LORD GOD, on this occasion, made a promise to Moses, similar to that which, as the MESSIAH, He afterwards made to the apostles†. This,

* Luke xx. 38.

† Matt. x. 19, 20. Mark xiii. 11. Luke xii. 11, 12. Luke xxi. 14, 15.

proves, that the *extraordinary influence* of the HOLY SPIRIT was at that time exerted, though not in so abundant a degree as after the promulgation of the Gospel.

SECTION LIX.

MOSES AND AARON DELIVER GOD'S MESSAGE TO
THE ISRAELITES.

From Exodus, Chap. iv.

AND the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

And Moses took his wife, and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my first born.

And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.

And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD, who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.

And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

And the people believed : and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By taking his family with him, Moses testified his faith in the LORD. The expression, *I will harden Pharaoh's heart*, will be explained in the sequel ; it is sufficient to remark here, that the LORD speaks of this as a purpose relating to a future time, not as a thing already done. Pharaoh had not yet committed that offence to which the punishment here threatened is annexed, but the LORD foreknew that he would commit it.

The rod of GOD was that which had been turned into a serpent, and which was the ensign of Moses' office, as the Minister of the LORD.

The Almighty being now about to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by forming their posterity into a nation, as his own peculiar people, styles them *His first born* ; this title signifies, that Israel was the first nation which he took into immediate covenant with Himself.

How comfortable must it have been both to Moses and Aaron to compare together the revelations which had been separately made to them ! It seems that they mutually encouraged each other, and hastened to execute the divine commission which they had received.

Moses soon had a proof of the foreknowledge of GOD, for he found the fears which he entertained, that the Israelites would not attend to him, groundless. They hearkened unto his voice as the Lord had said* ; and

* Exodus iii. 18.

the miracles performed in their sight served to prove the truth of his divine mission.

The behaviour of the Israelites, on this occasion, was perfectly just and proper, worthy of the imitation of all who are sensible of the goodness of God in time of affliction.

By this lesson ministers are admonished not to be discouraged from the performance of their public duties by apparent difficulties, since the LORD may be expected to co-operate with their endeavours, if they proceed agreeably to His will. And all others are admonished to receive, with reverence and gratitude, those intimations of the divine favour, which it is the duty of ministers to make known to them; and which, as now contained in *Holy Writ*, are equally certain and valuable as if communicated to us by ministers immediately inspired.

SECTION LX.

MOSES AND AARON GO TO PHARAOH.

From Exodus, Chap. v. and vi.

AND afterwards Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

And they said, The God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God: lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get ye unto your burdens.

And Pharaoh said, Behold the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

And Pharaoh commanded the same day the task-masters of the people, and their officers, saying,

Ye shall no more give the people straw to make bricks as heretofore, let them go and gather straw for themselves.

And the tale of the bricks which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them : ye shall not diminish aught thereof : for they be idle ; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein ; and let them not regard vain words.

And the task-masters of the people went out and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.

Go ye, get you straw where you can find it : yet not aught of your work shall be diminished.

So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt, to gather stubble instead of straw.

And the task-masters hasted them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks as when there was straw.

And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's task-masters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick, both yesterday and to-day, as heretofore ?

Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants ?

There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick ; and behold, thy servants are beaten ; but the fault is in thine own people.

But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle : therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD.

Go therefore now and work ; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.

And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case after it was said, Ye shall not diminish aught from your bricks of your daily task.

And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh.

And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge ; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us.

And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, LORD, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people ? Why is it that thou hast sent me ?

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

Then the LORD said to Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh : for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

And GOD spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD :

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of GOD ALMIGHTY ; and by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them *?

And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage wherein they were strangers.

And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage : and I have remembered my covenant.

* It is the opinion of several good Critics, that this verse should be read interrogatively ; for it is certain, that God *was* known to the patriarchs by the name of JEHOVAH.

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you of their bondage: and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.

And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a GOD: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your GOD, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear, to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage; I am the LORD.

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

But

But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

And the Egyptians shall know, that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.

And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The attention which was at first paid to Moses and Aaron, by the Elders of Israel, strengthened their faith, and encouraged them to go to the king of Egypt.

Before we make any remarks on the character of Pharaoh, it will be proper to observe, that there are degrees of wickedness, and that *presumptuous sin*, which proceeds from wickedness of spirit, and consists* in reproaching the LORD, despising His word, and wilfully breaking His commandments, is its last stage. Presumptuous sin is in Scripture called the *great offence*†. A presumptuous sinner is justly regarded of God as an outcast from the race of mankind; for he is at enmity with God and man; and having broken the first law of nature, by refusing obedience to the CREATOR, he can have no claim to any privileges as a *creature*.

It is remarked by the Royal Psalmist‡, *that the LORD made known his ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel*. The dispensations of His Providence, therefore, towards these his chosen people, demand our attentive consideration. We find, from different passages of Scripture, (which will be noticed in their turn)

* Num. xv. 30, 31.

† Ps. xix. 13.

‡ Ps. ciii. 7.

that the *way of the LORD* with *presumptuous sinners*, is either to strike them dead by some signal judgment, or to withdraw His grace, and give them up to “*a reprobate mind*, or a mind void of judgment*,” and make them unwilling instruments of shewing forth to the world the greatness of that power which they defy.

Pharaoh was a sinner of this description: he had resigned his heart to ambition and avarice, which led him first to injustice and cruelty, and then to a presumptuous defiance of the GREAT CREATOR of the universe.

When Moses and Aaron entered into the presence of Pharaoh, and delivered, in a solemn manner, a message from the LORD GOD, he refused to listen to them, pretending that he knew of no such Being as the LORD GOD, and disclaimed His authority. This was an act of presumptuous defiance; and it behoved the LORD to maintain his own honour.

Pharaoh's *not knowing* the LORD was no excuse for him: his very ignorance was a sin, because his own reason would have taught him, that there must be a SUPREME BEING; and if he had not been totally devoid of piety, he would at least have paid attention to the persons who professed to be the immediate ministers of the SUPREME BEING; and he would have feared to treat with rigour those whom the LORD styled *his people*; on the contrary, the haughty tyrant resolved to increase his cruelties to the Israelites on this very account, and commanded even the messengers of the LORD to submit to his yoke.

The task imposed on those among the Israelites, who were styled *officers*, was particularly hard; for they were required to enforce on their brethren the severities of the cruel monarch. The answer which Pharaoh made to these unhappy men, when they applied to him for redress, shews that he had no clemency in his nature.

* Rom. i. 28.

The situation of the officers was truly distressing : they were enjoined to perform and exact impossibilities. They had not yet experienced the wonderful goodness of the LORD : they had no Scriptures to support their faith, by relations of what had been done for others under the like circumstances : we cannot then wonder that they should fall into despondency, when they found their case worse, instead of better, for the interference of Moses and Aaron. This trial was so great, as to stagger the faith even of Moses himself : he could not, by his own reason, discover why the LORD should do evil to the people He had promised to deliver ; or why he should delay their relief, when every human means failed. To revive his hope, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to inform Moses, what He designed to do, in order to accomplish the purpose He had before declared : and that Moses might not doubt His power to effect it, the LORD reminded him of the excellency and perfection of His Divine nature, enumerating the several titles by which He had formerly been known to the patriarchs.

The name JEHOVAH is synonymous with LORD, and the original word is frequently so translated in our version of the Old Testament ; it can belong to none but God Himself ; for it imports, not only eternal existence, but omnipotent power, and unchangeable truth. By this title, the DIVINE IMAGE of GOD was distinguished from false deities in the family of Seth* ; and by this He revealed Himself to Abraham and Jacob.

That Moses might not be disheartened by the opposition of Pharaoh, GOD intimated to him, that the proud king would make great resistance ; but that he should finally be subdued. As a farther encouragement Moses was assured, that GOD remembered his covenant, and attended to the distresses of His chosen people.

* Gen. iv. 26.

What could be more comfortable to the Israelites, than the words which God dictated to Moses to speak unto them? They contained every thing that their hearts could wish, yet the people derived no consolation from them: harassed with continual labour, and overwhelmed with grief for their accumulated misfortunes, they had no leisure to consider the authenticity of the message which Moses delivered to them. He had as yet done no act to engage their confidence; and the things which He promised to them, were such as had never been done for any nation. In consideration of these circumstances, we may presume, God pardoned their *unbelief*; for we do not read that He expressed any displeasure at their murmurings.

As Moses had found on a former occasion, as well as in addressing the Israelites, the want of persuasive eloquence, it was natural for him to fear a second repulse from the king of Egypt.

It is observable, that in giving a charge to Moses and Aaron, the LORD assigned to each of them a distinct province: Moses was to be the immediate representative of JEHOVAH, invested with authority to demand the obedience of Pharaoh; and Aaron to be his prophet, or subordinate minister. The LORD Himself engaged to perform signs and wonders.

From the expression *I have made thee a God to Pharaoh*, we may understand, that every petition which this obdurate king might have occasion to offer for respite, from time to time, should be made to Moses, as the LORD Himself disdained to hearken to him. That Moses and Aaron might not suppose God required of them more than they were able to perform, the LORD acquainted them that they would have nothing to do but to speak and act as He should from time to time direct; and that

they

they might be prepared for great opposition, He also informed them, that " He should harden Pharaoh's heart ;" by which (I think) may be understood, not only that the LORD would abandon Pharaoh to his own wicked inclinations, but that he would moderate, for a time, that part of the punishment annexed to presumptuous sin, which is emphatically called the *terror of the LORD* ; a kind of instinctive dread of divine vengeance, the very reverse of that *consolation* which the righteous often feel, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of the heaviest afflictions.

From the expression, *The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD*, it is evident, that they believed in false gods ; and the history of ancient times corroborates this opinion, for it is related, that they were notorious for numberless idolatries.

We may learn from this lesson, that God's delaying His mercy is no proof of His having forsaken His servants ; that He compassionates their sufferings, and draws nearer to them the more they are oppressed, and that He bears with their infirmities. These considerations should incline us to place our trust and confidence in Him.

We also learn (as the Apostle expresses it) that such as do not like to retain God in their knowledge*, he gives over to a reprobate mind, or a mind void of understanding ; destitute of the aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest evil that can be inflicted in this life, for the assistance of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to help our discernment, in respect to the things which belong unto our peace, and to regulate our judgment in all spiritual matters. The person, who is deprived of this divine guide, however wise he may be in worldly matters, abuses his reason in religious concerns,

* Rom. i. 28.

and commits the greatest enormities. While we are *willing* to retain God in our knowledge, there is no fear that He will abandon us. Let our *will* therefore ever co-operate with His grace; and be it our earnest and daily prayer to God, that He may not take his HOLY SPIRIT from us!

SECTION LXI.

THE RODS TURNED INTO SERPENTS — THE WATER
TURNED INTO BLOOD.

From Exodus, Chap. vii.

AND the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying,

When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers, now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.

Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's bank against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go that they may serve me in the wilderness ; and behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD : behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink ; and the Egyptians shall loath to drink of the water of the river.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood : and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.

And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded : and he lift up the rod and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants ; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

And the fish that was in the river died, and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river ; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments ; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them ; as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink ; for they could not drink of the water of the river.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was observed in the last section, that those who openly opposed the LORD subject themselves to the dreadful punishment of being "given up to a mind void of judgment." In this condition was Pharaoh; he disdained to obey the voice of the LORD GOD; on which account Divine grace was withheld from him, and he had no guide of his actions but human reason, blinded by pride and prejudice; in consequence of which those very circumstances, which had a direct tendency to excite in a religious mind sentiments of reverence and devotion, hardened his heart, and strengthened the wicked resolution he had formed.

As the LORD foresaw that Pharaoh would require a miracle to be wrought, in confirmation of the mission of Moses and Aaron, he directed them how to proceed in this case.

By sending for the magicians, Pharaoh expressly defied the LORD. We are told by St. Paul, that these persons were named Jannes and Jambres: that they were men of corrupt minds, and resisted the truth*.

It is evidently beyond the reach of human art to turn rods into serpents, and we cannot suppose that the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the universe would permit any inferior Being whatever to *alter* the works of his hands: we must therefore ascribe the miracle which appeared to be wrought by the magicians to *Divine power*, not to

* It has been inferred from several texts in Scripture, that signs and wonders could be wrought by the Devil and his agents. These must have been mere delusions, and indeed they are called "lying wonders." *Real miracles* could only be wrought by the power of God. How far God suffered devils to deceive their worshippers for their punishment is unknown to us. See Deut. xiii. 1.—Matt. xxiv. 24.—2 Thess. ii. 9.

their enchantments. * By causing their rods, as well as that of Aaron's, to be transformed, in order to be swallowed up by his, the LORD strongly intimated His own supremacy over their idols. But Pharaoh could not discern the power of the LORD, for his foolish heart was full of hatred of God, pride, unmercifulness, maliciousness, and other malignant passions, with which the HOLY SPIRIT will not dwell; therefore God withheld his grace, and Pharaoh's heart was of course hardened.

The miracle which is next recorded was equally astonishing; for what can be more different than the liquid substance that flows through the veins and arteries of living animals, and the element of water? This change was certainly beyond the magicians' art to effect, or even that of the demons, whose aid they may be supposed to have invoked.

The changing of the water into blood, and killing the fish, was a very heavy judgment upon the Egyptians; as they abstained from eating most kind of animals, drank scarcely any thing but water, and fed greatly upon fish. But though the power of the CREATOR was so evidently displayed in this miracle, we find that Pharaoh still refused to obey the voice of the LORD.

As the miracles, recorded in this section, were wrought to prove, that the Divine Being, whom we call GOD, is the SUPREME LORD, we should regard them as evidences of this important truth.

By changing inanimate sticks into living reptiles God demonstrated, that no creature is of any particular order or species, by necessity, or merely by a regular course of nature, but according to his will. How thankful then should those be who are placed in such a rank

in the creation as enables them to contemplate his wondrous works, and to hold communion with Him on earth ; and who enjoy a well founded hope that they shall, after death, be happy in his presence for ever in heaven !

Water is bestowed by the bountiful CREATOR in such abundance, that few experience the want of it to a distressing degree ; but let us imagine to ourselves what would be our unhappy condition, should this element, so necessary to our comfort and refreshment, be suddenly changed into blood, or taken from us ! We learn, from this section before us, that the CREATOR has power to alter it as he sees fit, and he can as easily take it away ; let us then be very careful not to provoke God, to deprive us of so invaluable a blessing, or turn it into a curse ; and let us reflect on the numberless benefits we derive from water, that we may be thankful for God's goodness in bestowing it.

SECTION LXII.

THE PLAGUES OF FROGS, LICE, AND FLIES.

From Exodus, Chap. viii.

And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs.

And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of

of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs.

And the frogs shall come up both upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt: and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.

And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses that they may remain in the river only.

And he said, To-morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know, that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.

And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried unto the LORD, because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.

And the LORD did according to the word of Moses: and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.

And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the

the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them: as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

And they did so: for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and in beast: and the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians did so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh: (lo, he cometh forth to the water:) and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me:

Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.

And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know, that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be.

And the LORD did so: and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants houses, and into all the land of Egypt; the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies.

And

And Pharaoh called for Moses, and Aaron, and said, Go ye sacrifice to your God in the land.

And Moses said, it is not meet so to do ; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God ; lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us ?

We will go three days journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness ; only ye shall not go very far away : intreat for me.

And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD, that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to-morrow : but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more, in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.

And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

And the LORD did according to the word of Moses ; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people : there remained not one.

And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The same that has been said respecting the changing of the water may be applied to the plague of frogs. It is manifest, that neither the magicians nor their idols possessed miraculous power, or it would have been displayed in *driving the frogs, flies, and lice away* ; but instead of their being useful in this respect, Pharaoh was under the necessity

necessity of intreating Moses and Aaron to supplicate the LORD, in order to obtain deliverance, yet he shewed no signs of repentance. He gave way to the power of the LORD, only because he was at that instant sensible of his own comparative weakness; but he felt no remorse or sorrow for his wickedness and presumption.

What a triumph had Moses and Aaron! The haughty tyrant, who a few days before had commanded them to work as his slaves, now becomes a suppliant to them for mercy!

By hearkening to the prayer of Moses, in behalf of Pharaoh, the LORD greatly honoured his minister. Well might Moses say *ironically*, to Pharaoh, "*Glory over me.*"

The LORD was pleased to suffer Pharaoh to name the exact time at which the plague of frogs should be removed; and it is observable, that the king did not entreat that it might immediately cease, but mentioned the morrow; from which may be inferred, that he was unwilling to owe any thing to the LORD, supposing that the frogs would go of themselves by that time. The event agreeing with Pharaoh's own appointment, proved that all was the work of GOD. If Pharaoh had not had "*a mind void of judgment,*" surely these wonders would have convinced him, that *there is none like unto the LORD GOD.*

By the dust, we may understand those light particles of earth, which being raised imperceptibly by the air, are only to be seen in the sun beams; and which, as they fall, lodge on every substance that is in the way to receive them; even these, changed into vermin, must have been very tormenting; and how wonderful was the transformation! Who but the CREATOR could effect it?

It

It is to be observed, that when Aaron smote the earth, *all* the dust of the land of *Egypt* became lice. The efforts of the magicians must therefore have been directed against the land of Goshen, in which the Israelites dwelt. Here they were compelled to acknowledge publicly a Divine power; but even the testimony of the Egyptian priests * was not sufficient to soften the proud heart of Pharaoh, who gave a convincing proof of the LORD's prescience, by opposing all conviction, as He had foretold. Though it is not mentioned before, we may reasonably conclude that a distinction was, from the *first*, made between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The former did not deny the LORD to be God. He had chosen them as his peculiar people; and such calamities as were sent upon the Egyptians, added to their other afflictions, would have driven them to downright despair; besides the Egyptians could not have discerned the finger of God, had his own people been fellow-sufferers with them.

It is likely that Pharaoh and his subjects would have regarded it as the effect of chance; and that even the Israelites themselves might have overlooked the mercy, had not the LORD expressly called them to observe the difference he made between them.

The plague of flies was a very distressing one, as may be easily conceived, if we consider that there are a number of species of insects that go under this denomination; most of which have powers of tormenting, either by venomous stings, which give intolerable pain; or disagreeable buzzings, that are extremely disturbing. The Psalmist observes, that the Egyptians were "*devoured with flies* †;" and they certainly must have suf-

* The magicians were idolatrous priests.

† Ps. lxxviii. 45.

ferred great anguish from them, or the haughty Pharaoh would not have relented.

On this occasion, he stipulated that the Israelites should not go out of his land ; which shews that he retained the same principle of oppression, which had hitherto actuated him to treat them with rigour.

The Egyptians idolized those animals which the patriarchs offered in sacrifice, and of course would have taken great offence at seeing any of the flocks and herds offered in sacrifices to the LORD. From the question of Moses, "*Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us ?*" we may infer that sacrifices had been omitted by the Israelites during the Egyptian bondage ; the rite however was not forgotten.

Though frogs are in general harmless creatures, and it is a great mark of weakness to be terrified at them, they are certainly very disagreeable in houses. Our merciful CREATOR, who, in all parts of the world, has shewn a tender regard for the welfare of mankind, has so disposed this, and many other species of noxious creatures, that they give no annoyance to us ; but, on the contrary, prove beneficial, by feeding on what would render stagnated waters prejudicial to our health. Yet how apt are we now to overlook these marks of his kindness ! The miracle we are now considering, is calculated to awaken, in our hearts, proper sentiments ; therefore, while we rejoice, that we have not frogs in our chambers, in our beds, in our kneading troughs, and our ovens ; let us remember that it is God who preserves us from so distressing an evil.

We have equal reason to be grateful for God's goodness in respect to noisome insects, which seldom abound, except where cleanliness is wanting ; nor should we be
unthankful

unthankful to his providence, for keeping us from being *devoured by flies*. There is not an insect in nature, however small and insignificant many kinds may appear, but is capable, by an immoderate increase in number, of being a plague to mankind.

It is impossible to reflect on the power of the CREATOR and the love which He displays towards the human race, even in matters which, to the inattentive, appear of little importance, without feeling a thorough conviction, that He must undoubtedly be the greatest and best of Beings. Let us, therefore, be ever ready to acknowledge God as the LORD of the whole creation ; and, as such, let us pay Him our willing homage.

SECTION LXIII.

THE PLAGUES OF MURRAIN, BOILS AND BLAINS,
AND HAIL.

From Exodus, Chap. ix.

THEN the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still ;

Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep : there shall be a very grievous murrain.

And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel, and the cattle of Egypt ; and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.

And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land. And

the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

And Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

And the LORD said unto Moses, and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh:

And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains, upon man, and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt.

And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven: and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

And the magicians could not stand before Moses, because of the boil: for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them: as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of the Hebrews; Let my people go, that they may serve me.

For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people: that thou mayest know, that there is none like me in all the earth.

For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.

And

And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power: and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

Behold, to-morrow about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt, since the foundation thereof, even until now.

Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field: for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses. And he that regarded not the word of the LORD, left his servants and his cattle in the field.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb in the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground: and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt, since it became a nation.

And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast: and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron,

and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

Intreat the LORD, (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD: and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know, how that the earth is the LORD's.

But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not fear the LORD GOD. And the flax and the barley was smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the Egyptians did not feed upon the flesh of oxen, calves, &c. cattle were of great value to them; some kinds for carrying burdens, others on account of their milk, and some as idols; it must therefore have been a heavy punishment to them to lose these creatures.

The text says, *all* the cattle of Egypt died; meaning
all

all which had the *murrain*. By cutting them off in this manner, the LORD evidently proved, that “ *all the beasts of the field are his* *.”

It appears very hard, that poor animals should have suffered for the sins of men; but as God's tender mercies are over all His works, and the cattle could not have committed any offence against Him, we may be certain that the LORD so ordered the judgment as to inflict less pain on those which died, than they would have endured had their lives been prolonged.

The plague of boils must have been a very afflictive one, for they were of the most painful and rancorous † kind; and it is remarkable, that the magicians seem to have been tormented by them to the greatest degree; and that in consequence of them they yielded the contest, which they had hitherto carried on with Moses and Aaron: by this circumstance the supremacy of the LORD God of the Hebrews, over the idols of Egypt, was made manifest.

The storm, which the LORD sent upon the Egyptians, was the more dreadful to them, because in Egypt it is a very uncommon thing to see *rain*, much less *hail*. The Psalmist has given a very poetic description of this judgment: “ *He destroyed the vines with hail, and the sycamore trees with frost: He gave up the cattle also to the hail, and the flocks to hot thunder-bolts ‡.*” And from the account which this section gives of it, we find that God employed three elements against Pharaoh, the *air* in the thunder, the *water* in the hail, and the *fire* in the lightning; all jointly demonstrating that the God of Israel is the God of nature.

We find, from this section, as well as the foregoing ones, that, so far from *impelling* or *inclining* Pharaoh to

* Psalm l. 10. † See Deut. xxviii. 27. ‡ Ps. lxxviii. 47, 48.

do evil, God did every thing consistent with Divine justice to reclaim him. He never sent a judgment upon Egypt without first warning Pharaoh of it, and informing him for what end it was designed ; and if the LORD with-held his *restraining grace*, it was only as a friend with-holds his advice from one who refuses to be influenced by it ; and who, in order to prevent mischief from falling upon the innocent, redoubles his kindness to those whom the other strives to injure. Had Pharaoh drawn nigh to God, God would have drawn nigh to him *.

The plague of boils was of such a nature, that had not the LORD, who sent it, healed those who were afflicted, it would have proved fatal ; but it was his will to prolong the life of Pharaoh, in order to make him a farther instrument of displaying His Divine power.

There was a remarkable discrimination made among the people of Egypt, in respect to the calamities occasioned by the storm of hail, which affected the property of those only who did not regard the word of the LORD. This strongly intimated that God was *disposed* to shew mercy to them.

Though (as has been observed before) the LORD *moderated* in Pharaoh and his people that *terror* with which He generally torments the minds of presumptuous sinners, so as to enable them to endure reiterated judgments, the king was not totally exempt from it. The mighty thunderings awakened, in Pharaoh's mind, a sense of guilt, and extorted a confession from him, that *the LORD was righteous, and he and his people wicked* ; but his fear was very different from that which is described to be the beginning of wisdom †. It was no more than a temporary dread of divine vengeance,

* James iv. 8.

† Prov. i. 7.

impelling him, instinctively, to seek relief from Him, who alone could give it. It did not produce humility and godly sorrow. The mercy of God, which should have led him to repentance, served but to harden his heart, and make him more obdurate ; which is the usual effect of divine mercy upon those, who, by provoking God to withdraw the aid of His HOLY SPIRIT, subject themselves to the influence of that malignant Being, whose delight it is to make mankind ungrateful to their Almighty Benefactor.

This section teaches us, that the LORD can *wound* and can *heal* *. That an extraordinary mortality among cattle is designed by him as a punishment to men ; that the elements of air, fire, and water, are under His direction : that the thunder roars, and the lightning flies, at his command ; that the most violent storm ceases at his bidding ; and that he employs all these for the chastisement and reformation of wicked princes and nations. It also informs us, that it is sometimes the way of the LORD to avert these evils from individuals, when he sends judgments on a king and people in general. Let us therefore acknowledge Him as the God *of the whole earth* : and ever keep in mind, that His mercy is over them that fear Him.

SECTION LXIV.

THE PLAGUES OF LOCUSTS AND DARKNESS.

From Exodus, Chap. x.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh : for I have hardened his heart, and the hearts of his servants ; that I might shew these my signs before him :

And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and

* Deut. xxxii. 30.

of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them : that ye may know, how that I am the LORD.

And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me ? Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coasts.

And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth : and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field.

And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians ; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth, unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us ? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God : Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed ?

And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh : and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God : but who are they that shall go ?

And Moses said, we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go : for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.

And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go and your little ones : look to it ; for evil is before you.

Not so : go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD ;
for

for that you did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.

And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east-wind upon the land all that day and all that night: and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field through all the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you.

Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only. And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

And the LORD turned a mighty strong west-wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea: there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine

hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt ; even darkness which may be felt.

And Moses stretched forth his hand towards heaven : and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days

They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days : but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD : only let your flocks and your herds be stayed : let your little ones also go with you.

And Moses said, Thou must give also sacrifices, and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.

Our cattle also shall go with us : there shall not an hoof be left behind : for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God ? and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the beginning of this section, we find the LORD again repeating to Moses, that *he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh and all his servants* : it is evident that this expression (as we observed before) must not be taken in the sense which the words at the first view seem to convey : the true meaning in this place appears to be, that God had given them up to obduracy, and, instead of cutting them off, would continue to endue them with *bodily strength* to sustain the various plagues and torments, which, for the sake of maintaining His own honour in the world, He should bring upon them.

If we call to mind the variety of afflictions which
were,

were, in a short space of time, successively sent upon the Egyptians, and that in particular they had lately been afflicted with a putrid disorder, which must have weakened them greatly; we may easily conceive, that unless the *principle of animal life* (which seems to be here meant by the *heart*) had been *hardened*, nature must have sunk beneath such a pressure of calamity. Under these circumstances the Egyptians were very unfit to encounter the horrors of a tremendous storm, which was calculated to occasion the most violent agitation of spirits.

It is observable, that all the threatenings sent from God to Pharaoh, were *conditional*. *Let my people go, &c. —else, if thou refuse—I will bring, &c.*—from whence we may infer, that Pharaoh's *will was free*, and that he had no *injustice* to complain of, but would have found pardon if he had repented. It should likewise be remarked, that he had time allowed him for reflection, between one judgment and another, and generally a day and night; but the longer the respite that was granted him, the more obdurate he became. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed inclined to comply, *in part*, with what was required of him, but he never did this from a principle of obedience to God, for he was resolutely bent to maintain his own right to the services of those whom the LORD claimed as His own peculiar people, which was exalting himself against God.

Locusts are a species of very devouring insects. Travellers * inform us that they fly in the air all compact together, like a vast cloud, sometimes fifteen or eighteen miles long, and about ten or twelve miles broad, so that they quite darken the sky, and make the brightest day obscure; and that wherever they alight, they devour all the corn in an hour's time, and frequently make a famine

* See Stackhouse on the Bible, in the Notes.

in the country. These insects do not live above six months, and when they are dead, the stench of them so corrupts and infects the air, that it very often breeds pestilences. The prophet Joel calls the *locust*, the *caterpillar* and the *palmer-worm*, God's *great army*, which he sends among a wicked and rebellious people*. An ordinary locust is described by an ancient naturalist, as so fierce that it can kill a serpent, by taking it fast by the jaws, and biting it to death. How formidable then must those of Egypt have appeared, which were such as had never been seen before ! not that they were created on purpose to be a plague to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, (for it appears that they came with a strong east wind from a distant country, most likely a place which had never been inhabited by mankind) but they certainly were directed by a divine impulse to visit these coasts.

There is something in the thoughts of famine so very shocking, that no person, who properly reflects, would willingly expose himself to its horrors. Pharaoh could not avoid seeing that this dreadful evil was coming fast upon him, and his people. The locusts devoured, with astonishing rapacity, the vegetables, which made a principal part of their food. Every hour's delay increased the danger ; therefore, impelled by fear of the *power* of the LORD, he entreated Moses and Aaron to implore forgiveness for him, but it soon appeared that he had no true penitence. The LORD's mercy, like the kindness of a tender father to a profligate son, served only to harden him still more to resist his will and commands.

The plague which followed was more dreadful than any which had yet been sent, not only on account of its duration, but there is a solemnity in darkness, which naturally fills the mind with awe. That which fell upon

* Joel ii. 25.

Egypt was, as the author of the Book of Wisdom informs us, attended with unusual horrors*: and when we consider that those inward comforts which religion inspires (the only succours of reason) were withdrawn, we may easily suppose, that fear magnified every real danger, and created many imaginary ones. The *terror of the LORD*, was now sent forth upon those who defied Him, producing all the horrors of an evil conscience.—“Over them was spread an heavy night, an image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them; but yet were they unto themselves more grievous than the darkness.”

The Israelites might have taken the opportunity of departing during the Egyptian darkness, but the LORD would not permit them to steal away, as He intended to deliver them from bondage, in a triumphant manner.

After what has been said concerning the other plagues of Egypt, it is the less necessary to point out the instruction which the present section is designed to convey. The wonders it relates furnished additional proofs of the omnipotency of the LORD, of his great forbearance towards sinners, and of his goodness to those who fear and worship him.

It may, however, be proper to observe, that the race of insects which proved so destructive to the Egyptians is not extinct; as formidable an army of them as ravaged that country, would soon collect and annoy our own, should the CREATOR shew his power for that purpose, and he has myriads besides of different species, all capable of doing great mischief to the produce of the fields and gardens; (even those minute ones which occasion blights and mildew are considered as important evils.)

* Book of Wisdom, xvii. This chapter may be read here as a commentary on this part of Sacred History.

Let us therefore humbly beseech God to forbid their approach ; and let us never forget to be thankful to Him, for preserving to us the fruits of the earth.

It is God alone that dispenseth light and darkness, and though He has established the courses of the heavenly bodies, so that the sun and moon mark a regular succession of days and nights, months and years, He undoubtedly can, even without subverting the plan which His wisdom has formed, make darkness like noon day, and noon like the shadow of death, in any part of the world. We ought, therefore, to be thankful to His providence for the light of the sun and moon, and endeavour to live so conformably to his holy will, that we may never provoke Him to send upon us, such dreadful visitations as struck dismay and terror into the minds of the most hardened sinners.

SECTION LXV.

THE LORD'S LAST MESSAGE TO PHARAOH.

From Exodus, Chap. x. and xi.

AND the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt ; afterwards he will let you go hence : when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt :

And

And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill ; and all the first-born of beasts.

And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast ; that ye may know, how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee ; and after that I will go out.

And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more ; for in that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die.

And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. And he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you ; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh : and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By the former plagues the LORD had demonstrated, that all nature was at his command ; that the lives of animals depended on His will, and that he could send health or disease on mankind as it seemed good in His sight. He next resolved to prove, that he had equal power

power over the lives of mankind, by inflicting that punishment which he had before threatened*.

It seems to be intimated in this section, that some of the Egyptians were so affected by the judgments they had endured, that they feared to refuse any thing which Moses or the Israelites should require of them; at least they wished to be rid of a people, whose detention had been the cause of so much distress to their country. Pharaoh, however, continued obstinately resolved not to obey the LORD: and instead of humbling himself, received, with the most furious rage, the awful message which Moses delivered to him.

The apostle St. Paul observes, that it is one effect of impiety to deaden the tender affections of the soul†; and the passage before us affords a striking proof of this assertion. Pharaoh had sufficient reason to believe that the LORD was able to do what he threatened; and, if his heart had been susceptible of the usual emotions of parental love, he would readily have made a sacrifice of his *pride* to save the life of his child; the same may be said of his subjects.

The expression, *the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart*, is frequently repeated, perhaps to keep in mind, that unless he had been *strengthened*, as has been before observed, he could not have maintained such a long contest with Omnipotence. It is certain, that Moses did not suppose that God had doomed Pharaoh to commit evil, and suffer for it, for he frequently admonished him to obey the command of the LORD; and repeatedly intreated the LORD to deliver him from the plagues: this would have been a mockery of God, nay, an act of presumption in Moses, if he had been convinced, that God Himself prevented Pharaoh's compliance, on purpose to bring him to destruction.

* See Section lviii. † Rom. i. 31. "Without natural affection."

We learn from this section, that the death of children is sometimes meant as a divine chastisement to parents. In respect to the Egyptians, it was most likely designed as a punishment for bringing up theirs to defy the LORD GOD of the Hebrews. If then we have any desire to preserve the lives of our children, let us be careful not to offend the LORD by any flagrant act of impiety ourselves; or encourage in our offspring the practice of any vice, that may provoke Him to cut them off in the morning of their days.

SECTION LXVI.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

From Exodus, Chap. xii.

AND the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it, according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating, shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same

same month ; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it.

And they shall eat the flesh in that night ; roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire ; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning : and that which remaineth of it until the morning, ye shall burn with fire.

And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand : and ye shall eat it in haste ; it is the LORD's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast : and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment ; I am the LORD.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations ; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason ; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

For

For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side-posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons for ever.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the Israelites were not *presumptuous* or *profane*, like the Egyptians, they were yet *sinner*s, and having, as such, incurred the penalty of death*, they had no claim to divine favour, neither could they redeem themselves. But God graciously determined, of His own bountiful mercy, before the foundation of the world, to pardon all those who would repent of their sins, believe, fear, and trust in Him, and obey his Divine commands; and ordained that the *promised seed of the woman* should satisfy His justice, and make atonement for the sins of the whole race of mankind, by submitting to a voluntary death for their redemption.

* Rom. vi. 23.

The time for this sacrifice was yet at a very great distance, when Israel was about to be delivered from Egyptian bondage ; but as that deliverance was designed to be a type of the greater deliverance from the *bondage of sin* ; and also a pledge to assure his faithful servants of the certainty of it ; the LORD instituted the *passover*, as a representation of the great sacrifice to be made in the fulness of time.

It was a very significant regulation, that in respect to ecclesiastical affairs, every succeeding year should commence with the solemnization of a rite which intimated a redemption from death, through the mercy of God.

The passover was instituted about the beginning of our March, which prefigured, that the Redeemer of the world should suffer in that month : before the institution of the passover, the Israelites began to date the new year from the middle of September, and still continue to do so in civil concerns.

It was required that every household should kill a lamb for itself, that each individual might have an opportunity of expressing his faith in God's promises, by joining in that divine ordinance, which was a token of his intended mercy to them.

A Lamb without blemish was a fit emblem of a Saviour who would live a life of perfect innocence and holiness. The LORD's commanding the Lamb to be slain, indicated, that He, having appointed death to be the punishment of sin, it was necessary, for the satisfaction of divine justice, that this penalty *should* be paid by the *Redeemer*, of whom the Lamb was a type or representation ; and the sprinkling of the blood served at once to testify the faith of the Israelites, and to intimate the efficacy of the blood of the REDEEMER.

The paschal lamb was slain before Israel was delivered
out

out of Egypt, to signify, that the Saviour must suffer before mankind could be delivered from the bondage of sin. It was killed before the law of Moses, or the sacrifices of Aaron were enjoined, to shew, that deliverance comes to the human race only through the REDEEMER.

The manner in which the Israelites were required to eat the passover, was calculated to bring to their remembrance, in future, the situation they were in when they eat it the first time.

The lamb was roasted with fire, to denote (as is supposed) the dreadful pains which the REDEEMER would suffer. Unleavened bread was an emblem of sincerity and truth*, as bitter herbs were of repentance and mortification.

This rite was to be observed *for ever*, that is to say, as long as the Mosaic dispensation should last; we shall find by the New Testament, that it was no longer obligatory after Christ was slain.

It is needless to enlarge farther on the subject of the Jewish passover, as the rite is abolished; CHRIST, the true *paschal lamb*, has been slain for the redemption of the world, through whom alone Christians are to look for salvation; but it may be useful to us to reflect on the wonderful goodness and mercy of GOD, in appointing a mean whereby atonement might be made for sin, and an interest in the blood of the REDEEMER secured, long before He came to lay down his life as a ransom for mankind.

It is observable, that the Israelites were commanded to instruct their children in the *meaning* of this rite, from whence may be inferred, that it is the duty of christian parents to explain to their children the meaning of that institution, which is now substituted in the

* 1 Cor. v. 8.

place of the passover. Yet how many are suffered to grow up in total ignorance of that Holy Sacrament, which was ordained to keep up a constant remembrance of what has been done for them !

SECTION LXVII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES.

From Exodus, Chap. xii. and xiii.

And it came to pass that at mid-night the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon ; and all the first-born of cattle.

And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians ; and there was a great cry in Egypt ; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel : and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.

Also take your flocks, and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone, and bless me also.

And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste : for they said, We be all dead men.

And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses ; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.

And

And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required : and they spoiled the Egyptians.

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children,

And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened : because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt : this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the first-born among the children of Israel both of man and of beast ; it is mine.

And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage ; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place : there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore
unto

unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD.

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days : and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt.

And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand and for a memorial between thine eyes ; that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth : for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this ? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast ; therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the first-born, being males, but all the first-born of my children I redeem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may suppose that Moses delivered the LORD's message to Pharaoh on the same day that he directed the Israelites to separate the lambs for the passover, which was several days before the last plague was sent upon Egypt, so that the Egyptians had sufficient time to reflect upon

upon the danger to which they exposed themselves, by detaining God's people ; but while the Israelites, with faith and devout expectation, prepared for their departure, Pharaoh and his presumptuous subjects went on encouraging each other, in an obstinate defiance of the threatenings of that great Being, who had already fully demonstrated to them, that He is possessed of *omnipotence*. There was something so foolish in this conduct, that there is no accounting for it in any other way than by imputing it to a want of that Divine principle, which, as has been before observed, is necessary to regulate *human reason*, and prevent the passions from obtaining an ascendancy over it. It is evident that Pharaoh did not, on this occasion, make a proper use of his reasoning faculty, or he must have discerned the folly of opposing the will of the LORD GOD.

Of all the judgments that had yet been inflicted upon the Egyptians, none was equal in its effects and duration to *the death of their first-born*. This was calculated to recal that tenderness which impiety, by raising turbulent passions in the mind, had in a manner obliterated ; and at the same time to mortify the pride of those who exalted themselves against GOD, as it deprived them of the principal hope of their family, the *first-born son* ; he who was to succeed his father in honour and estate, and support that pride which aspired to domineer even over the people, whom GOD had honoured with the title of His own *first born*. The other plagues were but temporary evils in comparison with this. The river now no longer flowed with blood, but yielded again the refreshing element of water. The houses of the Egyptians were cleansed from noisome reptiles, their bodies from vermin, the flies which devoured them were dead, and the land was purified from the corruption which they had occasioned. The loss

of cattle which they had sustained by the murrain might be repaired by purchase, and subsequent increase. Health was restored to their bodies; the tempest was past, and the air again serene; future crops of flax and barley might supply the deficiencies, which the hail and fire had made; and the quick growth of vegetables promised a restoration of the herds of the field; the army of locusts was no more; and trees would again shoot forth their leaves, and bear fruit.

The darkness was such as had never before been known, and might possibly never be known again. But who could restore to life their *first born*? What could recompense them for the loss of their children? The afflicted parents could not console themselves with the thought, that their beloved offspring were removed to a world of bliss, where they might hope to meet them again in glory, crowned with immortality; on the contrary, their sorrow was aggravated by the "TERROR OF THE LORD," which seized their minds, and filled them with fearful apprehension that the vengeance of an offended God would soon fall on their own heads.

It was one part of God's denunciation against the Egyptians*, that he would execute judgment against all the *gods of Egypt*.

As the Egyptians originally descended from Misraim, the grandson of Noah, they must originally have had the knowledge of the LORD among them, nor had they totally lost it in the days of Abraham and Isaac; but by degrees they fell into the grossest idolatry; and, besides a number of idols, which they called celestial and terrestrial gods, they paid adoration to brute animals; and that to so great a variety, that in almost every town or village they worshipped different idols: which was

* See Section lxiv.

often the cause of bitter quarrels, and sometimes of dangerous wars. They paid divine honours to the lion, the bull, the sheep, the goat, the cat, the dog, the ibis, the wolf, the crocodile, and many others. If any person killed one of the sacred animals designedly, he was punished with immediate death: these animals were fed at great expence while living; and, when they died, the Egyptians went into deep mourning, and lamented them as if they had been their dearest children. These, in all probability, were the beasts that died in the last plague, (the gods of Egypt) and not the cattle of the field. In this account of the idolatries of the Egyptians, we see, that, as the apostle expresses, "Though they knew GOD, they glorified Him not as GOD, but changed the glory of the uncorruptible GOD (even his own express IMAGE) for four-footed beasts and creeping things; the *truth* of GOD into a lie; honouring the *creature* more than the CREATOR, who is blessed for evermore*!"

The prediction, which Moses delivered to Pharaoh, was now fulfilled†. His own proud heart was humbled, and his people were urgent to send the Israelites out of their land; they at length acknowledged them to be the people of God‡, and willingly furnished them with such things as might be necessary to add splendour to the sacrifice they were going to make in the wilderness.

At first sight it appears a dishonourable act in the Israelites to borrow of the Egyptians what they could have no intention to return; but we must consider, that they did it by the express command of GOD, and that all things in this world are properly His; He created, governs, and sustains the universe; therefore may justly take from one, and give to another, as His infinite wisdom sees proper. And it appears afterwards, that the

* Rom. i.

† See Section lxiii.

‡ See Section lxxv.

treasures collected on this occasion were to be used in the LORD's Sanctuary. Besides as Egypt and her proud king had forfeited all pretensions to God's bounty, by an open defiance of His power, we cannot wonder that He should deprive them of the riches of which they were so utterly unworthy.

With what joy must the Israelites have seized the long wished-for opportunity of escaping from such barbarous oppressors !

Rameses was the chief city in Goshen ; Succoth was about twelve miles from it : here the Israelites stopped to review their company.

The mixed multitude are supposed to have been strangers of different nations, who lived in Egypt ; and who, having seen the wonders, which were wrought for the deliverance of the Israelites, resolved to accompany them, with a view to the improvement of their own fortune.

To *sanctify*, signifies to set apart for holy purposes ; it was very proper, that the Israelites should have a religious Rite, to call to their remembrance the great mercy of God, in sparing their first born, when those of Egypt were destroyed ; and that they should inform their sons of this memorable deliverance, and endeavour to excite in their minds love and reverence towards the great Author of it. In respect to keeping the passover, the Jews have been so far obedient to God's command, that they have never abolished it ; nay, those who have lived since the promulgation of Christianity, have been particularly tenacious of this Rite : and, believing that the *Redeemer* is not yet come, of whom the *Paschal Lamb* was a type, they still continue to observe the solemnity, as well as their present circumstances will admit of. The manner of their keeping it is this. On the sabbath day previous to the passover, the Jews have a sermon preached in their synagogue

gogue on the paschal lamb ; and two days afterwards all their furniture must be washed clean ; they search their houses that no leavened bread may be found, and are extremely scrupulous in making up the unleavened bread. Most commonly the master of the house makes it ; and if any of it falls to the ground, the dogs and cats are not suffered to eat it. It must be kneaded in a place where the sun does not shine ; and the cake, which used formerly to be given to the priests, is burned to ashes.

They are obliged to sit at a table like persons in haste to begin a journey, in memory of their departure from Egypt. The master of the family is surrounded by his children and domestics, when some cakes and part of a lamb are set before them ; they are then served with a composition of fruits, in a pie, made in the form of a brick, in remembrance of the bricks made by their ancestors in Egypt. They afterwards eat bitter herbs, in remembrance of the bitterness of Egyptian bondage ; and the shoulder of a lamb being held up in a dish, the master of the house repeats the following words : *Behold the bread of sorrow and oppression, which our forefathers did once eat in Egypt ; let him that is hungry draw near and eat ; this is the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.* This ceremony being over, a hymn is sung by all the company present : and when they come to that part, mentioning the ten plagues of Egypt, they pour a little wine on the ground, wishing that those plagues may be far removed from them : then they drink off the wine, and finish the hymn. The master of the house then washes his hands in clean water, and breaking one of the cakes, presents a part of it to each of the guests ; this being done, they begin to eat the lamb ; and what is left must be burnt ; and the ceremony concludes with a glass of wine.

In this account of the method, in which the modern

Jews celebrate the passover, we may observe a great resemblance of the original institution; and when we consider in what a wonderful manner the Jews, who were formerly a large united body of people, have been dispersed, and what obstructions their religion hath met with, it is astonishing to think, that they have preserved any of their ceremonies.

The feast of the passover * was calculated to furnish an incontestable proof to succeeding generations, that such an event, as the deliverance of Israel, had happened, because it must have been ordained in the lifetime of those who had escaped from the Egyptian bondage; for, however their descendants might have listened to fabulous tales, they never could have believed that they themselves had, from their very infancy, observed a ceremony in commemoration of a thing, of which they had never before heard; nor would Moses have been so foolish as to attempt to introduce this rite in remembrance of imaginary transactions, and to appeal to the knowledge and experience of six hundred thousand men, each of whom could have proved him an impostor.

We find, from this section, that the lives of children are in the hand of God; and that he can in an instant of time frustrate the ambitious views of those, who think only of the worldly prosperity of their offspring. It should therefore be the tender parent's care, to live a life of piety himself, and to dedicate, from the earliest infancy, not only his *first born*, but every dear child, which is given him, to the service of God, as Christians have the blessed opportunity of doing, in the sacrament of baptism, without excluding them from the common offices of life.

* Lesley's plain and easy Method with the Jews.

SECTION LXVIII.

THE ISRAELITES PASS THROUGH THE RED SEA—THE
EGYPTIANS DROWNED.

From Exodus, Chap. xiii. and xiv.

AND it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that GOD led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for GOD said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

BUT GOD led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up, harnessed*, out of the land of Egypt.

AND Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, GOD will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

AND they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

AND the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

HE took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They

* Or five in a rank. Margin of the Bible.

are intangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them : and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host ; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled : and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ?

And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel : and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

But the Egyptians pursued after them, (all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army), and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold the Egyptians marched after them ; and they were sore afraid ; and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ; wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt ?

Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians ? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew

shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen.

And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

And the Angel of GOD, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.

And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea: and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

And it came to pass that in the morning watch the

LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily ; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel ; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea ; and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared : and the Egyptians fled against it : and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them : there remained not so much as one of them.

But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians : and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore.

And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians : and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Had the Israelites been left to follow the dictates of their own minds, in all probability they would have taken the nearest way to the land of Canaan ; but they were very unfit for war, as they were easily intimidated,

midated, having had their spirits kept in subjection by severe bondage; they were therefore utterly unqualified to encounter such formidable enemies as the Philistines, who would naturally oppose the passage of such a numerous body of men through their land. Besides, the Israelites were apt to murmur and repine at every disappointment, and it is likely they would have revolted, and joined themselves to other nations, if they had perceived a prospect of present advantage. It certainly was the gracious intention of God, not only to bless them, but to teach them how they might pay him acceptable service; and for this purpose also he led them about through the wilderness, that in such a retirement they might without interruption receive and learn those laws his wisdom should ordain for them; and by degrees, be entirely weaned from idolatrous practices so abominable in his sight: which there is reason to suppose many of them were addicted to, and would most likely have retained in the promised land.

We find that the Israelites marched out of Egypt in regular order, and that Moses did not forget to take the bones of Joseph with him: these circumstances prove that the people enjoyed perfect tranquillity of mind, and had no dread of the enemy, at that time.

The *pillar of fire*, which went before the Israelites, was a token that the LORD God was present with them: of its appearance we can form no idea: for without doubt it was very different from that of common fire, or any other object in nature: one very astonishing particular attended it, which was, that it put on different forms at the same time, affording light to one people, and casting darkness on another. To the Israelites it served not only as a guide in their journeyings, but as a defence from the assaults of their enemies: it covered

them from the heat of the sun in the wilderness, where there were but few trees to shelter them ; it also served as a standing oracle, to which they might on all occasions resort and know the Divine will. This cloud may properly be called the vehicle of the LORD GOD, the place of his majestic presence.

Had not GOD condescended to give a visible token of His presence, the Israelites would scarcely have had courage to leave Etham, and follow Moses ; for they were ordered to encamp in a place which was so situated, as to furnish no means of escape from utter destruction, but by the miraculous interposition of their heavenly leader. On one side of them a range of craggy rocks, on the other (as is supposed) forts and garrisons of the Egyptians : before them the sea ; behind them the host of their enemies. at whose appearance, in all probability, they had been used to tremble ; who had humbled their very souls by their barbarous treatment, and whose commands it was death to dispute : they were strangers to the arts of war, unskilled to wield the sword, to draw the bow, or throw the spear and lance ; nor could they climb the lofty rocks, and hide themselves from the impending dangers ; neither were they furnished with vessels to carry them across the sea in search of a place of refuge or retreat.

The LORD knew * that Pharaoh had not given the Israelites leave to depart in obedience to His commands, but merely from sudden dread of Divine vengeance, and that both he and his people would repent and pursue after them : the LORD therefore removed His terror from the minds of Pharaoh and his people, and left them at liberty to follow the dictates of their own obdurate hearts ; in consequence of which, while they were yet

* Wisdom xix. 1, 2.

mourning and making lamentation at the graves of the dead, they committed another act, which discovered minds void of judgment, for hearing that, instead of returning, the Israelites continued their journey, they pursued those as fugitives whom they had just before entreated to be gone *.

To a set of unarmed men, the sight of such a formidable host must have been very dreadful, but after the numerous instances of the power and goodness of the LORD, which they had so recently witnessed, the Israelites had sufficient foundation to hope that they should be effectually delivered from their enemies, and therefore it was sinful in them to throw aside their confidence, even while the LORD was visibly among them; but considering them as the posterity of His faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in remembrance of His covenant, the LORD pardoned their weakness, and animated their faith by fresh promises. Their situation was such, that they could do nothing for themselves: all that GOD required was, that they should remain quiet, and only observe in what manner He would effect their deliverance.

Whoever has viewed the sea, may easily recollect with what magnificence and strength its waves follow each other; their ordinary force cannot be resisted by the most powerful army; how wonderful must it then have been to see them dividing and standing still on heaps at the lifting up of the rod of GOD, which Moses held in his hand!

The ANGEL OF THE LORD undoubtedly was the same Almighty Being who had been to mankind from the creation, the VISIBLE IMAGE of the only true GOD.

It is said, that the pillar of the cloud gave light to the Israelites, but cast darkness upon the Egyptians,

* Wisdom xix. 3.

from whence we may infer, that the latter had advanced into the sea, before they knew any thing of the miracle that had been wrought. How great then must have been their consternation, when the glory of the LORD beamed forth and discovered to them the danger of their situation ; mountainous waves standing on heaps collected together by that omnipotent Being whom they had so repeatedly offended, and ready to fall on their presumptuous heads ! A sudden conviction of the power of the LORD, and of their own weakness, seizing upon their spirits, and impelling them to flee from the unarmed people they were the instant before with full confidence of victory pursuing ! It is likely that in this confusion the Egyptians drove against each other, and by this means broke their chariot wheels. At length the Divine command was given ; Moses again lifted up his rod, and the fate of those who had so long opposed the will of the SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE was in an instant determined. Well might the Israelites fear the LORD, and believe his faithful minister !

From the wonderful history of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, we learn that the LORD GOD is undoubtedly the LORD and GOVERNOR of all things ; for every part of nature is subservient to His will, and He can alter or dispose of it according to His pleasure. Pharaoh himself could not have maintained a contest with the LORD GOD for a moment, had not his Almighty antagonist armed him with strength to endure His vengeance for the purpose of proving His own omnipotent power.

We also learn from this portion of Sacred History, how displeasing in the sight of GOD are *pride, cruelty, and impiety* : let us then be thankful to the LORD for His goodness, and never make an improper use of His gifts, lest we provoke Him to turn them into curses : and let us carefully guard our minds against the first temptations

temptations to *presumptuous sin*, by entertaining an humble opinion of ourselves, not omitting to pray to God to give us his grace, that we may not fall into hardness of heart, or contempt of His holy will and commandments.

From this part of the History of the Israelites, we may infer, that there is no situation in life, so distressing, but that God is able to deliver us from it. We must not indeed expect Him to perform miracles in our favour, by changing the course of nature, because miracles have ceased since the full establishment of Christianity: but if we read the history of different nations, and observe what passes in the world around us, we may find that Divine Providence frequently interposes in a wonderful manner, to relieve the distresses, and soften the afflictions of those who trust in God. We should therefore pray to God for protection, use the means He has furnished us with for our support, and when dangers threaten, or misfortunes befall us, we should then submit to his dispensations with patient resignation, and humble hope of deliverance, through his infinite mercy and goodness.

SECTION LXIX.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

From Exodus, Chap. xv.

THEN sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD: for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare him

him an habitation : my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD * is *like* a man of war : the LORD, is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.

The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right-hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power : thy right-hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee : thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together : the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil : my lust shall be satisfied upon them : I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with thy wind ; the sea covered them : they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, amongst the gods ? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonder !

Thou stretchedst out thy right-hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear, and be afraid : sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina.

Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed : the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them : all the inhabitants of Canaan shalt melt away.

* Wisdom xviii. 15.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone: till thy people pass over, O LORD, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance; in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots, and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD; for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This Divine song was so admirably adapted to the occasion, that it is needless to write a comment on it; it conveys a most lively idea of the sense which Moses entertained of the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites. Some parts of it are prophetical, and foretold the subsequent conquests of God's people. We find from this passage of Scripture, that singing of Psalms, or devotional songs, was a very ancient custom; and when performed with seriousness and solemnity, it is certainly extremely edifying, for it elevates the thoughts to heaven.

Miriam is supposed to have repeated the whole of Moses' song in concert with the women.

SECTION

SECTION LXX.

THE ISRAELITES MURMUR AGAINST MOSES.

From Exodus, Chap. xv.

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur ; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah ; for they were bitter : therefore the name of it was called Marah.

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink ?

And he cried unto the LORD : and the LORD shewed him a tree which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet : there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes ; I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians : for I am the LORD that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees : and they encamped there by the waters.

And they took their journey from Elim ; and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month, after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land

of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full : for ye hath brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ; and the people shall go out, and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

And it shall come to pass that on the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they bring in ; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt.

And in the morning, then shall ye see the glory of the LORD : for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD : and what are we, that ye murmur against us.

And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full, for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him : And what are we ? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.

And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD : for he hath heard your murmurings.

And it came to pass as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel ; speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread ; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

And

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

And when the children of Israel, saw it, they said one to another, what is this *? for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat,

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating; an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less.

And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much, had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating.

And Moses said; Let no man leave of it till the morning.

Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it, until the morning, and it bred worms and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath

† Marginal translation.

unto the LORD ; bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe ; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade : and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

And Moses said, Eat that to-day ; for to-day is a sabbath unto the LORD : to-day ye shall not find it in the field.

Six days ye shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws ?

See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days ; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

So the people rested on the seventh day.

And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna : and it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations ; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.

As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony, to be kept.

And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years,

years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The apostle St. Paul teaches us to regard the passage through the Red Sea as a *baptism**. God, of His own *free mercy*, opened a way for the Israelites to escape from Egyptian bondage; and received the whole nation under His protection, as His peculiar people. By entering into the sea, each individual expressed his faith in the Divine promises. The LORD went before them, to guide them to the land of Canaan. They willingly followed His guidance. From henceforth each person was an inrolled member of the LORD's congregation or church, His adopted son, and an inheritor, or heir to the Land of Promise.

The time was not yet come, at which the LORD proposed to destroy all the idolatrous nations, and settle His own people in their stead; besides the Israelites had contracted many bad habits in Egypt, and their faith in GOD was very imperfect. He therefore saw fit to expose them to a variety of trials, partly to improve their minds, and mend their hearts; and partly, to shew to the world the method of His Providence towards those whom He acknowledges as His people.

Soon did the Israelites forget the mercy of the LORD, in preserving them from the plagues of Egypt, and delivering them from bondage! On the very first disappointment, they began to murmur against Moses, instead of praying to the Lord to send them relief. It

* 1 Cor. x. 2.

is likely that they began to think God was going to bring a succession of plagues upon them, as he had done upon Egypt. To remove their apprehensions, the LORD immediately made the bitter water sweet, and commissioned Moses to give them a statute and an ordinance ; by the observance of which they might, through His infinite mercy, secure to themselves individually the favour and protection which He had freely granted them as a nation. This law required both *faith* and *obedience*.

Ancient historians assert, that there are several fountains of bitter water near the Red Sea ; possibly that at Marah was one of them. The author of the book Ecclesiasticus seems to be of opinion, that there was a natural virtue in the wood of the tree, which Moses cast into the fountain, to correct the bitterness* ; and that God graciously pointed out this medicine, to make its valuable property known to the world. Others suppose, that both the bitterness and the correcting of it are to be ascribed to the immediate power of God, who used the wood as a *sign*, rather than an *instrument* : however this was, the goodness of the LORD was equally displayed to the Israelites.

What a pleasing recess must Elim appear, after the turbulent scenes the people had lately passed ! Here they had an opportunity of resting themselves, and leisure to meditate on the wonderful goodness of the LORD ; but their all-wise Conductor knew, that continued prosperity would corrupt their minds ; and it was proper to put their faith and obedience to the test. How imperfect did these prove on trial ! The people saw themselves in a wild barren waste, where they thought they had no other chance but to perish

* Eccles. xxxviii. 5.

with hunger; instead of trusting to the LORD for their relief, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and foolishly wished to return again to the bondage, from which they had been so lately delivered. To convince them, that He was actually present among them, the LORD promised to give them a view of His Glory. What must have been their confusion, when it beamed forth upon them. Well might they exclaim, when they saw the Manna, *What is this?* Who could have expected that bread would fall like rain, from heaven; or that a number of fowls, sufficient to feed so great a multitude, would suddenly come to hand? In what a variety of ways can the Almighty display his power and goodness!

In the middle of April (which was the time of the Israelites encamping in the wilderness) quails are known to fly out of Egypt across the Red Sea in great numbers; the miracle consisted in GOD's directing them to the camp, at the very time He promised to send them.

The author of the Book of Wisdom describes manna, as "*able to content every man's delight, agreeing to every taste*.*" The LORD sent manna from day to day, to make the Israelites sensible of their dependence on Him for their daily support. The withholding it on the sabbath day served to keep in mind that it actually came from him, and that they were required to keep that day holy. It was a very astonishing circumstance, as it was of so corruptible a nature, that a portion of the manna should be miraculously preserved for so many years. This seems to be the first time that the rest on the seventh day was solemnly appointed to the Israelites as a people. In the family of Abraham, we may presume the remembrance of the day in which GOD ceased from

* Wisdom xvi. 20, 21.

the works of Creation was preserved; but during their hard servitude in Egypt, it is likely they were not allowed opportunity of resting from their labour, their deliverance therefore furnished an additional reason for keeping it.

To an attentive observer, great resemblance will appear between the ways of God towards the Israelites as *His people*, and towards Christians in the same view. The present section affords a lively representation of God's goodness to the latter in passing over the offences proceeding from the natural corruption of their nature; forgiving the sins they had committed before He called them; opening a way to a heavenly Canaan by means of baptism; requiring faith and obedience on their part; trying them with alternate adversity and prosperity; shewing His glory among them; supplying their temporal necessities, &c.

It is impossible to read an account of the Israelites murmurings and forgetfulness of the Divine mercy, without condemning them.—But while reason leads us to pass this condemnation, let it awaken conscience to an examination of our own hearts, and if we find there any propensity to return to the *bondage of sin*, let us think of what God has done for us—Let us gather up the bread that He has given us from heaven; even the comforts and blessings which flow from our Saviour—and let us keep the Lord's Sabbaths with religious veneration.

SECTION LXXI.

WATER FROM THE ROCK—THE DEFEAT OF THE
AMALEKITES.

WHEN the congregation of Israel removed from Sin, they pitched their tents in a place called Rephidim;

here they were distressed for want of water, on which fears arose that they should perish with thirst, and they began again to murmur against Moses. He endeavoured to persuade them to wait with patience to see what the LORD would do for them, but his remonstrances were vain, and at length the people became so outrageous, that they were almost ready to stone Moses; on which he had recourse to the LORD, who wrought an astonishing miracle for their relief. GOD informed Moses that He would stand before him (or cause the cloudy pillar to rest) in a certain part of mount Horeb, where there was a rock; this rock the LORD commanded Moses to strike; Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel, on which the flinty stone immediately gushed out with water, which afforded the people a supply, not only during their stay at Rephidim, but in their other encampments afterwards.

This water furnished salutary refreshment to the bodies of the Israelites, but there was a *spiritual rock* which followed them that flowed in streams of mercy, yielding comfort and refreshment to their souls*: this rock was CHRIST, the LORD Himself, the same Divine Being who is to Christians the *rock of their salvation*. Moses named the place where this miracle was performed, *Massah* and *Meribah*, which signifies, *chiding* and *temptation*, because the people murmured against him, and tempted the LORD to bring evil upon themselves, by requiring a sensible proof of His Divine presence among them, of which they had had such repeated proofs.

While the Israelites continued at Rephidim, the Amal-
 1 kites, a people descended from Amalek, the son of
 Eliphez, one of the sons of Esau, came out against them,

* 1 Cor. x. 4.

upon which Moses directed Joshua, a valiant young man, to draw out a party of the choicest men in the camp, and go out to meet them ; promising at the same time that he would stand on the top of the rock with the rod of God in his hand, during the engagement. Joshua obeyed, and Moses with Aaron and Hur ascended the mount : in this conspicuous situation Moses appeared as the minister of the LORD, and to shew that victory depended entirely on the Divine will, whenever he held up his rod, Israel prevailed ; but when he let it down Amalek prevailed : at length the strength of Moses being exhausted by standing in one posture, he sat down on a stone, and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, till the going down of the sun, at which time Joshua gained a complete victory over the Amalekites. It is supposed that the Israelites furnished themselves with swords as well as with abundance of other spoils, when the bodies of the Egyptians, who were overthrown in the Red Sea, were cast on shore.

After the battle was over, Moses was commanded to write it for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of all the people, that God would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, and that He had sworn to have war with the Amalekites, from generation to generation ; because, on this occasion, they had the presumption to lift up their hands against the throne of the LORD (that is against God himself), and the LORD knew that future generations of the Amalekites would do the same.

It certainly was a very inhuman action in this people to attack the Israelites, if they supposed them to be defenceless ; but as they were themselves descendants of Esau, it is most likely they knew God had pre-ordained to put the race of Jacob in possession of the land of Canaan ; and that trusting in the aid of false
 R 2 gods,

gods, the Amalekites came out against the Israelites with the hope of frustrating the designs of the LORD.

Moses named the place where this victory was obtained, JEHOVAH Nissi, that is, the LORD is my banner.

The defeat of the Amalekites opened a way for the Israelites to mount Sinai*, where GOD first appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and not far from the place where Jethro his father-in-law dwelt; who, having heard of the wonderful things which had been done for him and the people he conducted, took his daughter Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, and brought them to the Israelitish camp. This meeting gave great joy to all parties. Moses related what wonderful things had been effected by the power of the LORD; and Jethro, who was a devout man, offered up praises to GOD, saying, "Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them†. Jethro also joined with Moses, and the elders of Israel, in offering sacrifices, and in such other holy rejoicings, as their circumstances suggested.

While Jethro continued in the camp, he observed that Moses had a great weight of business upon his hands, in hearing complaints, and determining differences, the people being so numerous; he therefore advised him to appoint a number of inferior officers, men of ability, such as feared GOD, adhered to truth, and hated covetousness, to be rulers, some over thousands, some over

* Horeb and Sinai were two summits of the same mountain.

† Exod. xviii. 10, 11.

hundreds, some over fifties, and some over tens, with proper authority to hear and determine all common affairs, reserving all difficult cases and high concerns for his own decision. Moses followed this advice, and as soon as Jethro saw his plan put in execution, he took leave of his son-in-law, and departed into his own country. Jethro shewed himself to be, not only a good, but a wise man ; for the directions he gave to Moses, furnish excellent hints for the choice of magistrates, and officers of justice in general.

SECTION LXXII.

THE LAW GIVEN BY GOD FROM MOUNT SINAI—MOSES ASCENDS THE MOUNTAIN—BOUNDS PRESCRIBED TO THE PEOPLE.

From Exodus, Chap. xix. and xx.

IN the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desart of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness ; and there Israel camped before the mount.

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel ; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people : for all the earth is mine.

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount, shall be surely put to death: There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through: whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day.

And it came to pass, on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp, trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

And

And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire, with thousands of his angels*: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargest us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee, but let not the priests and the people break through, to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them.

So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

And God spake all these words, saying,

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or

* Psalms lxxviii. 17.

that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the LORD thy GOD am a jealous GOD, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me : and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain : for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy GOD : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day ; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings,

lightnings, and heard the noise of the trumpet, and beheld the mountain smoking : and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear : but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not ; for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not ; for he will not pardon your transgressions : for my name is in him.

But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak ; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites : and I will cut them off.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a wonderful event is here recorded ; It is impossible surely to read it, without being filled with the

utmost reverence and veneration. It happened exactly three months after the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt.

The LORD was now going to renew his covenant with the people whom He had *saved* and *redeemed* out of the land of Egypt. He designed to bestow great honours and privileges upon them; but expected that they should comply with certain conditions, which he required on their part. The advantages which, in his message by Moses, GOD proposed to the Israelites, were astonishingly great. To be the *peculiar treasure* of that ALMIGHTY BEING, who is the proprietor of the whole universe. A *kingdom of priests*, or a kingly priesthood, authorised to offer up sacrifices acceptable to GOD; and to be an *holy nation* sanctified by the *visible presence* of the LORD GOD among them. All that the LORD expected in return, was, that they should willingly obey His commands, and keep His covenant.

There was such amazing condescension and goodness in this proposal, that no rational being could hesitate a moment in expressing a ready concurrence with it.

To prevent the Israelites from entertaining any suspicion that Moses deceived them, the LORD promised to appear Himself, for the purpose of renewing his covenant with His people, but required Moses to *sanctify* them, by withdrawing them from secular employments, in order to give them time to prepare their minds for the approaching solemnity; and also to wash their apparel, that they might, when they approached the *Divine presence*, be as free from defilement, both in body and soul, as they could possibly render themselves.

Hitherto the Israelites had seen the LORD only in His wonderful works, and in the pillar of the cloud, which, though a pledge and token of His presence, gave no
idea

idea of His Divine Majesty. Little did they conceive what an awful scene was preparing for their view. It was highly proper to assign bounds to them, that they might keep at a respectful distance from that sacred spot, chosen by the LORD for Himself and His heavenly attendants.

The priests who are mentioned in this Section are supposed to have been the eldest sons of families*.

At length the expected day arrived, and the LORD *descended* (or made the *presence* of the DEITY manifest) on Sinai. The ever memorable morn was ushered in with the sound of the trumpet of the Archangel. The ALMIGHTY, making the clouds his chariots †, came flying upon the wings of the wind ‡; He covered Himself with light as with a garment, and was clothed with majesty and honour §. The pavilion of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, a thick cloud and impenetrable darkness ||, in which His ineffable glory veiled itself from mortal eyes, was pitched on the Holy mountain. The earth shook, and the heavens also dropped at the presence of GOD, even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of GOD, the GOD of Israel **. Thousands of celestial spirits, shining in immortal beauty, surrounded the darkness that covered the glory of the LORD ††. Their appearance was like flames of fire; and out of the fire went forth lightnings ‡‡. At the sound of the trumpet the people are said to have trembled: What must then have been their sensations, when, coming forth to meet their GOD, they beheld the glorious spectacle, of which the words even of the inspired writers can give but a faint idea! Strengthened to sustain the heavenly vision, Moses

* See Exod. xxiv. 5. † Ps. civ. 3. ‡ Ps. xviii. 10.

§ Ps. civ. 1, 2. || Ps. xviii. 11. ** Ps. lxviii. 8.

†† Ps. lxviii. 17. ‡‡ Ezek. i. 13.

spake unto the LORD : what he said is not related ; but we may conjecture, that it was something expressive of the people's penitence. To shew His kindness to them, the LORD called Moses (who acted as a *Mediator* between Him and the Israelites) up to the top of the mount ; after repeating His charge, that the people might not break the prescribed bounds, the LORD spake all the words of that excellent law, called the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, every sentence of which demands particular examination, as the observance of its precepts makes a principal part of the Christian religion ; and this law will never be abolished as long as the world lasts *.

We may assure ourselves, that this law was spoken by the LORD GOD Himself. Had it proceeded from an *angel*, or any *created being*, it certainly would have tended to lead the Israelites into the very crime they were repeatedly required to avoid, that of Idolatry ; for the people would naturally worship Him, who declared himself to be the God, to whom their adoration was due.

In addition to the Decalogue Moses received a number of ceremonial, political, and moral laws ; the former related solely to the Jewish constitution, and are abolished ; but those of a moral tendency are calculated for the whole race of mankind, and are worthy of the attention of Christians.

The Angel whom God promised to send to keep His people in the way, could be no other than the ANGEL OF THE LORD, HIS DIVINE IMAGE. He certainly cannot justly be regarded as a *created being*, for no one could have the *name of God* in him, who was not of

* In my Companion to the Common Prayer of the Church of England, there is a full comment upon the Decalogue ; in which I have attempted to shew in what manner Christians should keep these Commandments.

the same nature, for we have already seen that this great name, viz. I AM THAT I AM, is incommunicable to any creature. If it was dangerous for the Israelites to disobey Him to whom the name of God so essentially belonged, it must be equally so for Christians to dishonour Him, since it is He alone that can keep them in the way of everlasting life.

What Christian, that calls to mind the solemnity with which the Law was given from Mount Sinai, and that it was designed to be of perpetual obligation to all those who should be considered by God as His *peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation*, can forbear to practise its Divine precepts? By obeying the voice of our LORD, and keeping His covenant, Christians can alone secure to themselves these honourable distinctions. Let us then pay grateful homage to that transcendantly glorious BEING, who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, and us from the *bondage of sin*; and let us make His Divine precepts the rule of all our actions.

The LAW, we find, was given with such proofs of the greatness and majesty of God, that the people were ready to die with fear and apprehensions, and requested that, for the future, Moses might be their *Mediator*. Moses endeavoured to remove their terrors by assuring them, that the ALMIGHTY only meant to prove to them, that He was above all the heathen gods: and that this tremendous ceremony was intended, not to impress their minds with a slavish fear, but only to excite reverence, and restrain them from the commission of presumptuous sin.

Having said that Moses was henceforth to be a *Mediator* between God and the people of Israel, it is necessary to observe, that the word *Mediator* signifies one who acts as a peace-maker, or intercessor, between two contending parties; or as a deputy and representative of each to the other, as occasion may require.

It is to be particularly observed, that the Israelites were commanded not to make to themselves *gods* of silver or *gold*. This may be done without making graven images ; for whoever suffers riches to occupy that place in his affections, which the Deity ought to fill, or puts his trust in them, makes a God of them.

SECTION LXXIII.

MOSES AGAIN ASCENDS THE MOUNT.

JOSHUA AND THE ELDERS BEHOLD THE GLORY OF
GOD.

From Exodus, Chap. xxiv.

AND GOD said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel : and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD ; but they shall not come nigh ; neither shall the people go up with him.

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments : and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said, will we do.

And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins ; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people : and they said, All that the LORD hath said, will we do, and be obedient.

And

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.

And they saw the GOD of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw GOD, and did eat and drink.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.

And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of GOD.

And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and behold Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.

And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: And Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths

baths ye shall keep : for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations : that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore : for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall be surely put to death ; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people.

Six days may work be done ; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD : whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever : for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident, from the beginning of this section, that neither Moses nor the people had yet beheld the IMAGE OF GOD in the refulgence of Divine majesty. At the first visible manifestation of the Deity to him, Moses saw a burning bush, from the midst of which God called unto him. On other occasions, during the plagues of Egypt, he heard the words of the Lord, and it is likely that he saw some token of the *Divine presence* ; perhaps the cloudy pillar that afterwards went before the Israelites. From this pillar, which (as we have before observed) might justly be denominated the *vehicle* of the LORD GOD, a glimpse of His glory darted on

on the people, sufficient to convince them that He was actually present, and heard their murmurings for want of flesh and bread. When the Law was spoken on mount Sinai, they only heard a voice, they saw no similitude* ; for the LORD GOD was hid, by clouds and thick darkness from the eyes even of Moses, who was permitted to approach much nearer to the pavilion of the ETERNAL KING, than any of the Israelites : the honour of beholding Him was reserved for the time when the LORD should personally ratify the covenant He had proposed to His people. God required that they should first testify their acceptance of the conditions specified ; this we find they did, by declaring their readiness to do all that the LORD had said. As soon as the people had given their assent, Moses wrote the Covenant in a book, that it might be formally sealed.

It appears, from different parts of Scripture, that, according to the appointment of GOD, remission of sins was to be granted to mankind through the blood of the REDEEMER †. Till the time should be accomplished for the shedding of this, the blood of beasts was *substituted* as a sacramental representation of it, signifying, that the LORD would give those, who had faith in Him, and practised the obedience he required, an interest in the great sacrifice, that would be offered for mankind in general, so that they should enjoy the benefits it was designed to purchase.

It was observed in the history of Abraham, that the LORD made two covenants with him ‡, both of which were solemnly ratified and confirmed ; the first by a Divine promise on GOD's part, that He would fulfil the conditions of it, and on Abraham's by sacrificing ani-

* Deut. iv. 12. 15.

† Matt. xxvi. 28. Rom. iii. 25.

‡ See Sections xiii. xvii. xix. and xxiv.

mals ; the latter by an OATH on God's part, and on Abraham's by offering his son.

The covenant which the LORD made with the Israelites on mount Sinai, was to them a renewal of the *first* of these covenants, and related to their *temporal* state as the descendants of Abraham. The *everlasting* covenant, which related to the *spiritual* concerns of all who should at any time come under the denomination of God's people, operated unperceived by them for many ages, till *grace* and *truth* came by JESUS CHRIST* : but its benefits were conveyed to the Israelites, through the *temporal* covenant, till the time should come for the ratification of the *spiritual* covenant. As the *everlasting* covenant was to be sealed with the blood of the REDEEMER, it was requisite that the *temporal* covenant should be sealed with that of his appointed representative ? on this account Moses made use of the blood of beasts, as is here described. The twelve pillars which he erected, were designed as memorials to each separate tribe, of the alliance they were going to make with God. By sprinkling the altar, Moses dedicated it to the purpose of receiving the sacrifices which were afterwards to be made on it, and by this means it became a witness to the contract. By sprinkling the book, he made that a witness also ; and by sprinkling the people, he signified that the LORD accepted their sacrifices, and was ready to ratify the covenant with them, and consider them as His *elect people*.

In all civil contracts it is usual to have two copies, one for each party : in like manner was the LORD's Covenant conducted ; one copy was written by Moses, as has been already related ; the other was written by the finger of God. That Moses might not be suspected of collusion in this important affair, the LORD gra-

* John i. 17.

ciously vouchsafed to appear before a number of witnesses, who were the chief heads of the families of the Israelites, men of approved abilities and integrity*, in order to convince them that He was actually present.

What a wonderful vision were Moses and his companions honoured with ! from the short description which is given of it, we may judge, that it agreed with those which the prophets afterwards had ; exceeding every object in the whole creation for brightness and beauty ; but so moderated, that human nature might sustain it†.

As the LORD had many instructions to give to Moses, He called him up into the mount, and the glorious scene which had been just exhibited was hidden from view, Moses was left to reflect on the vision ; and to exercise his faith, he waited till the return of the next Sabbath, before he received any farther communications from the LORD.

It seems, that there was, in many particulars, great resemblance between the religious ceremonies of the heathens, and those of the patriarchs, during the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; for each built altars of stone or earth, and offered sacrifices on them ; but the former paid these divine honours to idols, the latter to the LORD, *the living God*.

While the people of Israel abode in Egypt, they were either addicted to idolatry, or extremely inattentive to religion ; and they had, in a great measure, lost the knowledge of the LORD, which Moses was sent to restore. They had been so accustomed to see a *ceremonial* worship, that they would not readily have received a religion purely *spiritual* ; on this account probably GOD, in condescension to their ignorance, and with a view of representing, in a *sensible* manner, divine things,

* See Exod. xviii. 21.

† Isai. vi. Ezek. i. 10. Rev. i. 4.

conveyed instruction by a variety of ceremonies, calculated to distinguish Him as the SUPREME GOD, and them as His peculiar church, which was to shew forth His name and honour to the world, by such forms of worship as bore evident marks of holiness, dignity, and purity, in opposition to the worshippers of idols, who had introduced into their sacrifices the most shocking absurdities that can be imagined.

We have reason to suppose, as has been observed before, that from the beginning of the world, while the worship of the LORD GOD remained uncorrupted, some particular place was distinguished by a visible token of the Divine Presence; for we read, that in the days of Enos, men began to call upon the name of the LORD*, or, as it is understood, to mean, united publicly in worshipping the LORD GOD.

When the Israelites were separated from the idolatrous nations, they received evident proofs that GOD was among them, by the appearance of the cloudy pillar; and as the LORD promised to display His glory to them in a distinguishing manner, He required them to make a Sanctuary, or Holy Place, in which He promised to manifest His Divine Presence on solemn occasions.

GOD could undoubtedly have received the adorations of His people in Heaven; but as the LORD vouchsafed to be the KING of the Israelites, He chose to have an earthly palace, or Tabernacle, to which they should repair to do Him homage, by offering the sacrifices He was pleased to ordain, accompanied with prayer and thanksgiving. During his long abode in the mount, Moses received ample instructions concerning the tabernacle, its appurtenances, and the ceremonies which

* See Section iv.

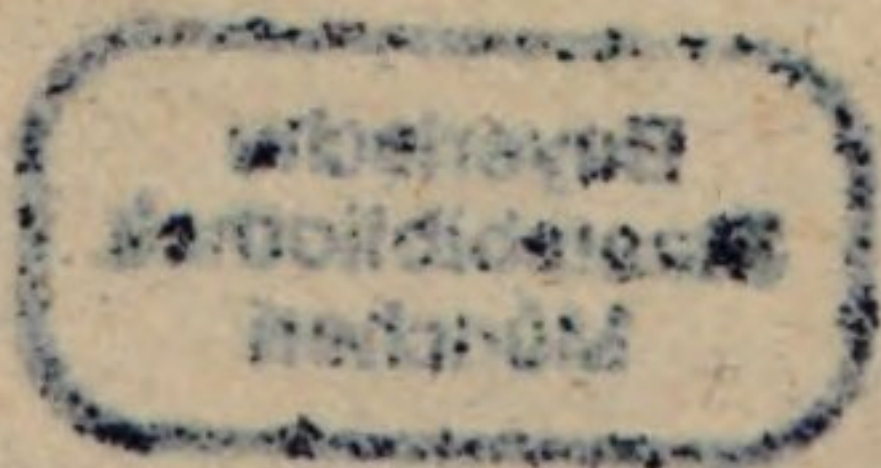
the LORD required to be observed in His worship; of which we shall give an account in a following section.

As soon as GOD had finished the works of creation He sanctified and blessed the seventh day, because on it He rested from all his work; and, without doubt, the Sabbath was observed by Seth, and all the descendants of Adam, as long as they retained the worship of the true GOD; but long before the time of the Israelites sojourning in the wilderness, idolatry had taken place, and many nations had quite set aside this institution, and forgotten the occasion of it; but the strict observance of the Sabbath day was enforced upon the Israelites, as soon as they were separated from heathen nations, as GOD's peculiar people; and the LORD GOD appointed the keeping the Sabbath day holy as a *sign* to distinguish them from idolators, and as a lasting token of His covenant, so that it might be considered as the ground-work of all their ordinances; and it seems probable from several passages in Scripture, as well as from the analogy of the Divine dispensations, that the Statutes, the Ordinances, and the Judgments of the Mosaic religion, were for the most part a restoration of the primitive religion after the Fall.

As the people of Israel had so much work assigned them to be done with expedition, they might have imagined themselves exempted for a time from a regular observance of the Sabbath; therefore Moses was commissioned to tell them expressly, that they must on no pretence profane it.

The Tables of Testimony contained the Ten Commandments; and were, in all probability, a counterpart of the Testimony written by Moses. These tables are said to have been written with the *finger of God*, because the writing was impressed on them by His immediate power, not by human instruments.

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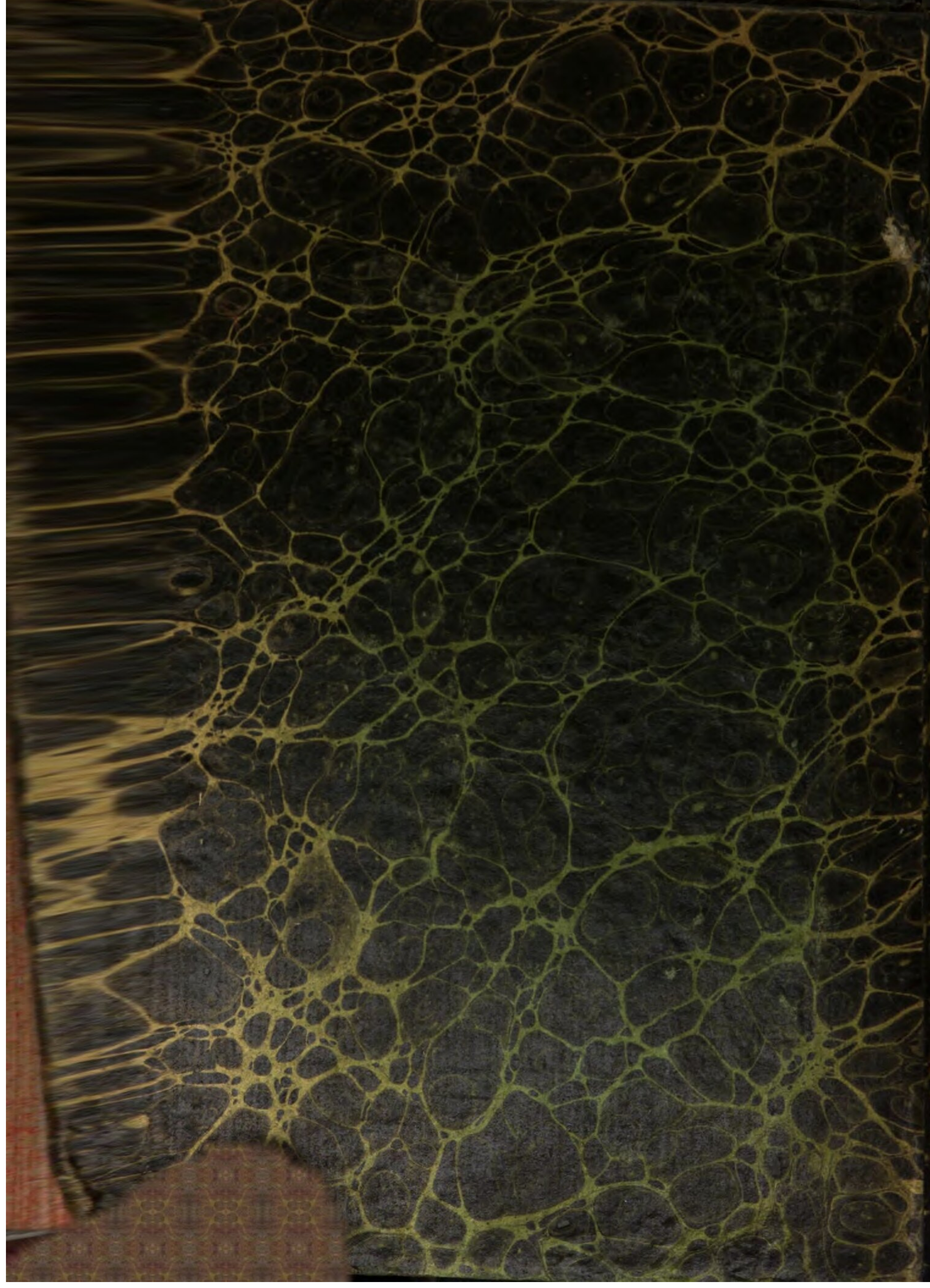
This section furnishes us with an additional proof, that there is in the GODHEAD a *visible Image*, who is to be honoured as GOD. It also teaches us the great importance of a religious observance of the Sabbath-day, to those who call themselves the people of GOD.

If Christians lay aside worldly pursuits, and spend this holy season in works of piety and charity (as the LORD directs) it will be regarded by Him as a *sign* that they love and honour Him; and the inward satisfaction and other blessings which He will infallibly bestow on them for doing so, will be a sign that GOD loves them. Nothing will more effectually separate us from wicked and profligate persons, nor more eminently recommend us to the favour of the good part of the world, as the servants of the living GOD, than a strict regard to the Sabbath day. If so, ought it not to be our great concern, not only to employ it well ourselves, but to instruct the ignorant to do the same? May no Christian then slight the opportunity of doing so, which the institution of Sunday-schools affords.

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